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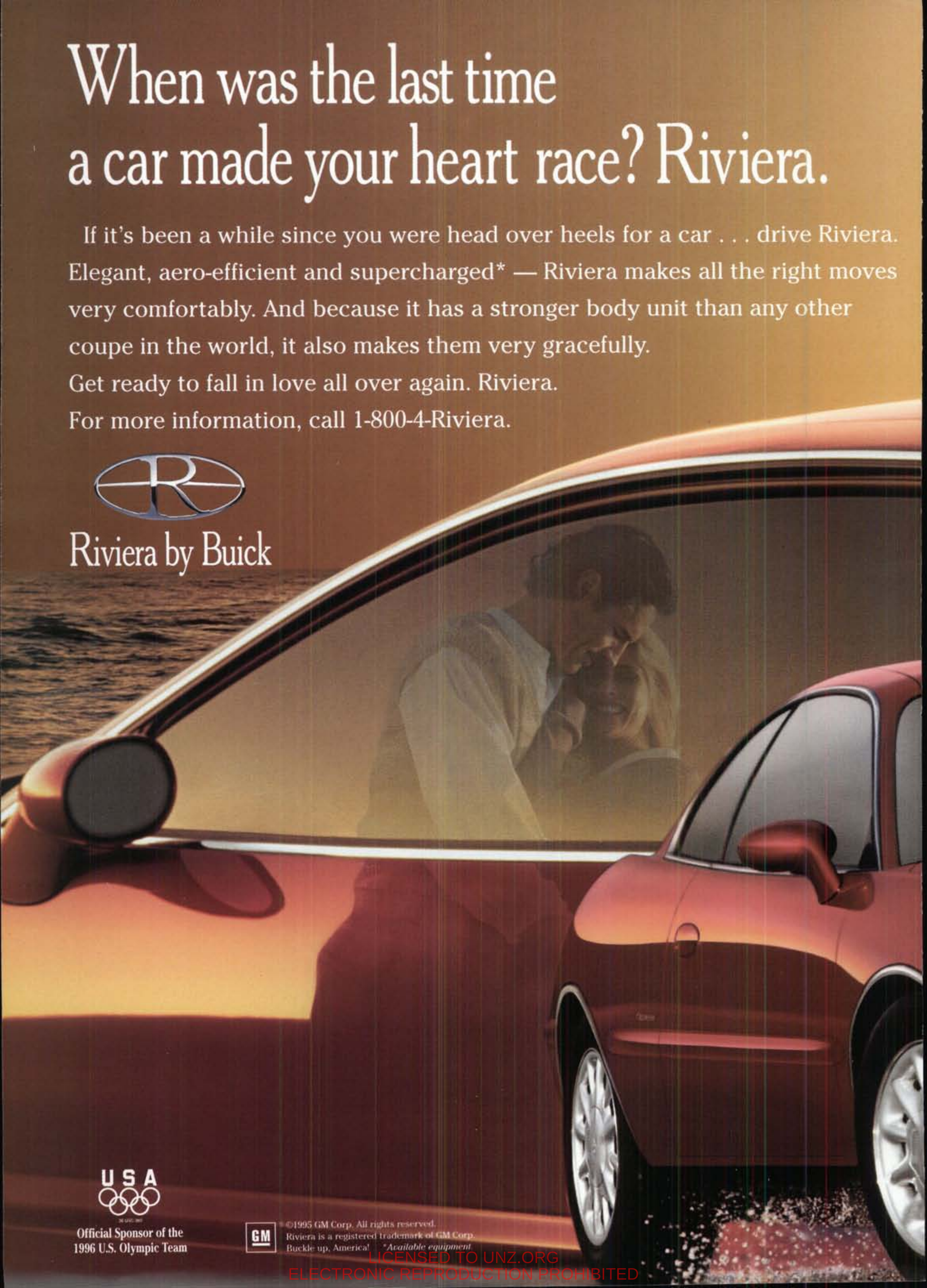

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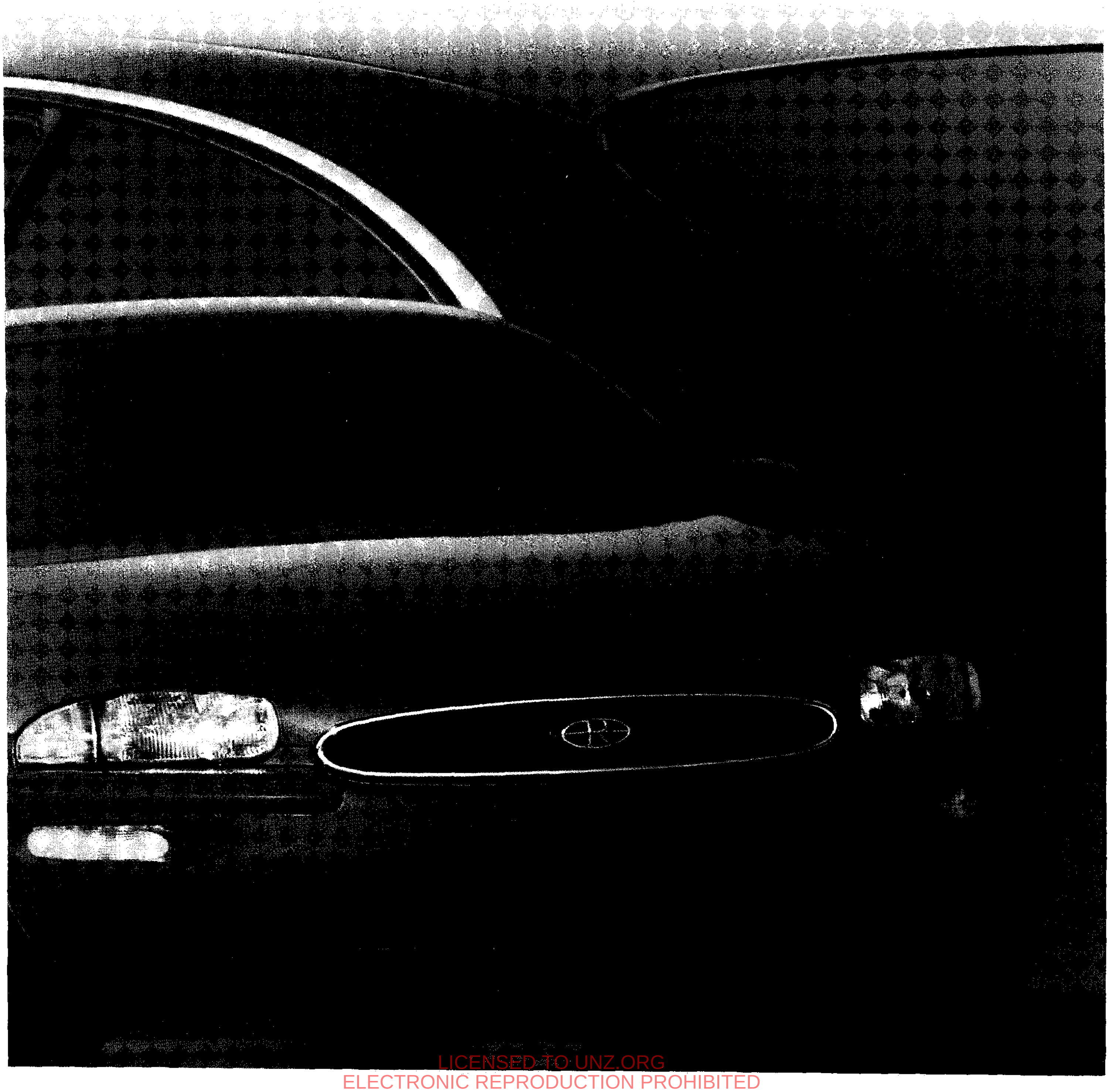

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# THE NEW YORKER

FEBRUARY 19, 1996

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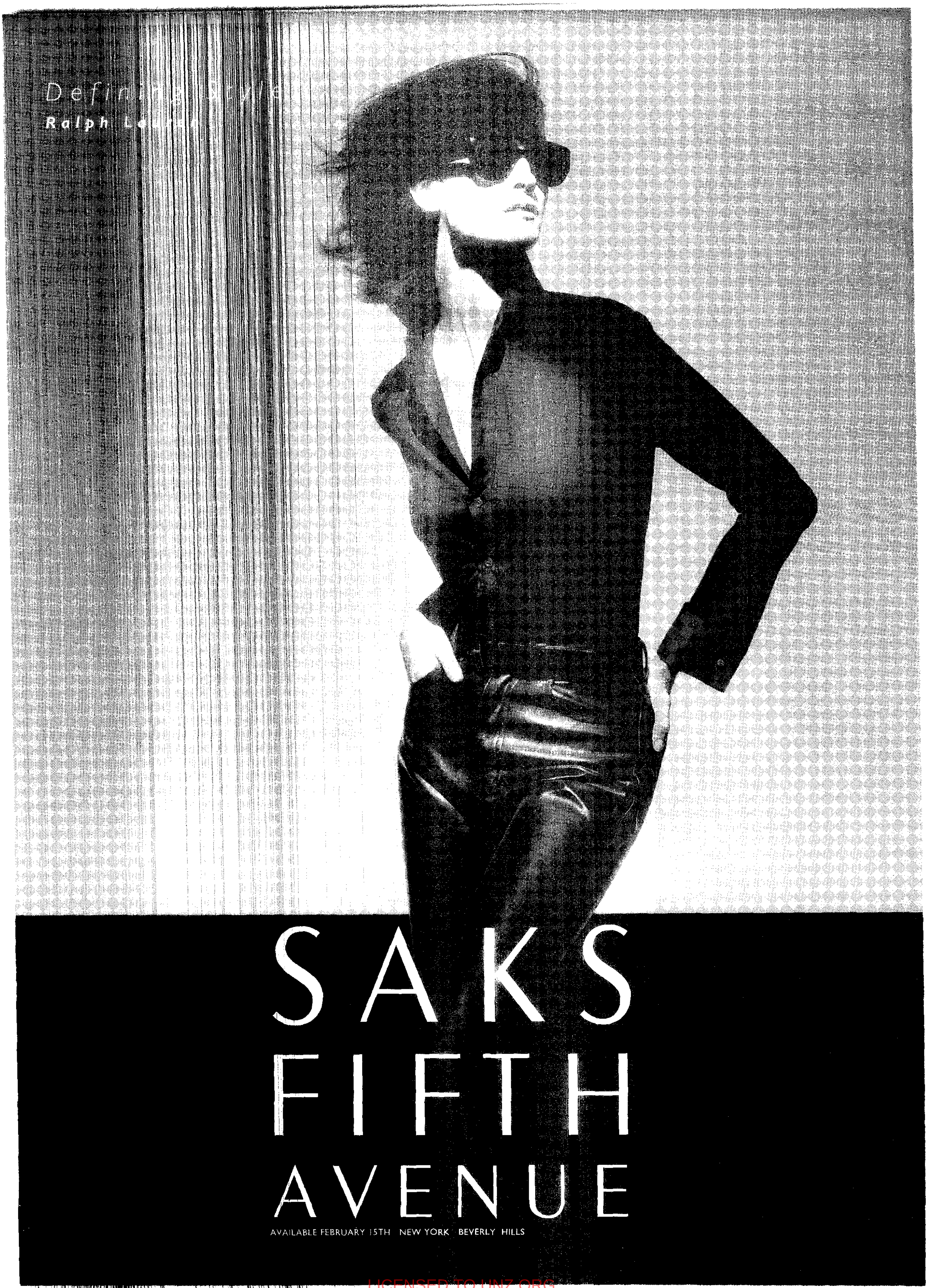
THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: the last week of February and the first week of March, the last week of April and the first week of May, the last week of June and the first week of July, the last week of August and the first week of September, the last two weeks of October, and the last two weeks of December) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXII, No. 1, February 19, 1996. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $39.95; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $83.00 (includes G.S.T.). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationle Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $91.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322. PRINTED IN U.S.A.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# COMMENT

## IS BURUNDI NEXT?

*The West remembers Rwanda, but does nothing.*

NOT long ago, President Clinton greeted French President Jacques Chirac on the South Lawn of the White House with a speech celebrating a French and American partnership in world affairs—"from the Persian Gulf to Haiti, from Burundi to Bosnia, France and America, side by side, standing for democracy, for progress, and for peace." The inclusion of Burundi in Clinton's list of foreign-policy hot spots was a welcome novelty. There is hardly a disaster more worthy of urgent attention. Years of fighting between an Army controlled by the Tutsi minority and rebels from the Hutu majority have turned that Central African country into one of the world's nastiest ethnic slaughterhouses. When Madeleine Albright, America's no-nonsense Ambassador to the United Nations, visited Burundi last month, she found it to be "on the verge of committing national suicide." That diagnosis may be too generous, conjuring up the possibility that the country could still be coaxed back from the ledge. Burundi, however, is already in free fall, and, even if it were to achieve an instantaneous, and enduring, return to the rule of law, its wounds would take generations to heal.

What does America propose to do about it? The hope, as Ambassador Albright told Burundi's leaders, is that Burundi can be prevented from becoming another Rwanda. "That's our basic policy," one United States diplomat explained. "We're shining the spotlight on the place. We didn't do that in Rwanda. When Rwanda blew, nobody was paying attention, and it's clear it took too long to react. This time, we're going to pay attention. The alarm bells are ringing. We're going to remind everybody there all the time, 'You could be the next Rwanda.' And we're saying, 'Don't be.' We're telling them, 'We'll help, we're into it, but you have to be the people that make history.' "

Unfortunately, Burundi has already made a great deal of history. As happened with its northern neighbor, Rwanda, the intricate traditional relationship between the Tutsi ruling classes (roughly fifteen per cent) and the predominantly peasant Hutus (eighty-five per cent) was reconfigured under Belgian colonial rule into an artificial—and polarizing—scheme of "ethnic" classification. In Rwanda, Hutus seized power at independence, and held on to it until the genocide of 1994, when at least eight hundred thousand Tutsis were slaughtered in a hundred days. But in Burundi, the Tutsis, despite their numerical inferiority, retained control of the Army, and used it to keep the Hutus down, killing

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THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. Thomas A. Florio, president; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, senior vice-president/deputy editor; Diane M. Silberstein, senior vice-president/publisher; Pamela H. Older, vice-president/manufacturing director; Peter Armour, vice-president/circulation director; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president/special-projects director; Maurie Perl, vice-president/public-relations director; Robert A. Silverstone, vice-president/business manager; Richard Levine, vice-president/human-resources director; Carmen Lopez, associate publisher; Cindy Schreibman, creative-services director; Gretel Schneider, marketing director. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1996 by *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

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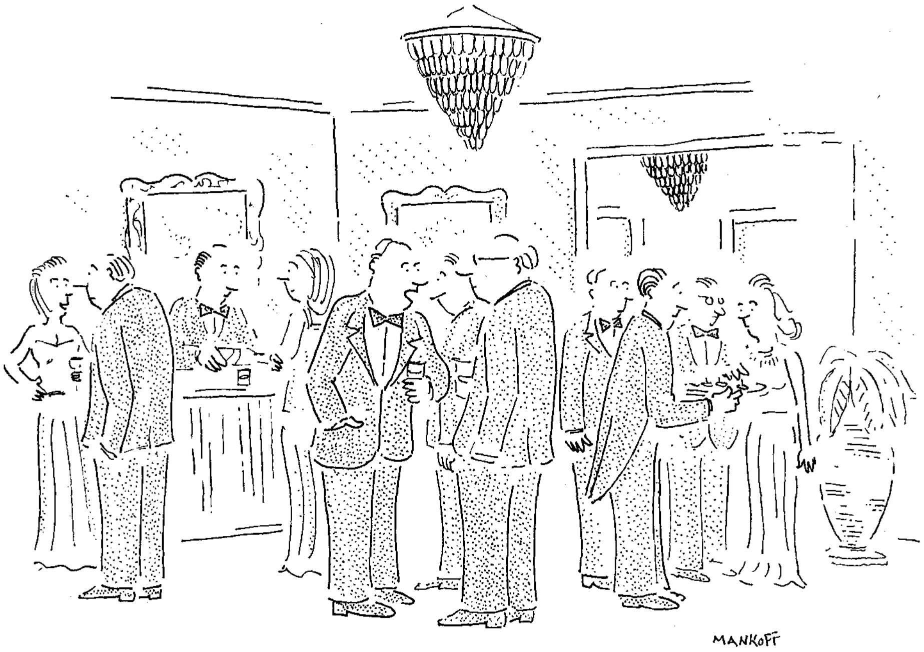


*"Oh, I like Forbes, but he hasn't got Dole's charisma."*

• •

hundreds of thousands in periodic extermination campaigns during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Hutus also killed thousands of Tutsis before political reforms in the early nineties brought a degree of calm. In the summer of 1993, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, won Burundi's first multiparty Presidential election. That October, Ndadaye's assassination by Tutsi military men triggered a massive Hutu uprising and a civil war, which, to date, has left at least a hundred thousand Burundians dead and nearly half a million displaced or forced into exile.

After something of a hiatus in 1994, the past year has brought a steady intensification of fighting, and the lines of battle have become more sharply drawn. Bujumbura, the capital, is now virtually an "ethnically cleansed" Tutsi enclave. Many of its surviving Hutus have fled into the surrounding hills and—reinforced by guerrillas from the Burundian and Rwandan Hutu refugee populations in Zaire—have laid siege to the city, which is hemmed in on the west by Lake Tanganyika. Traffic in and out of the city has been brought to a near-standstill. Electricity, which drives the water supply, has been sabotaged for weeks at a time. Hate-radio broadcasts from a Hutu stronghold in Zaire inflame the militias, while the state-owned Radio Burundi offers a slightly more nuanced party line to Tutsis. Beyond the city, the countryside is controlled by whoever has the upper hand—Army battalions and Tutsi youth gangs, or the more numerous but less well-armed Hutu forces. International aid workers estimate that at least a hundred Burundians are killed each week. And the aid workers themselves have been repeatedly attacked; ten foreigners and dozens of local staffers were murdered last year, and many aid operations have been cut back or withdrawn completely.

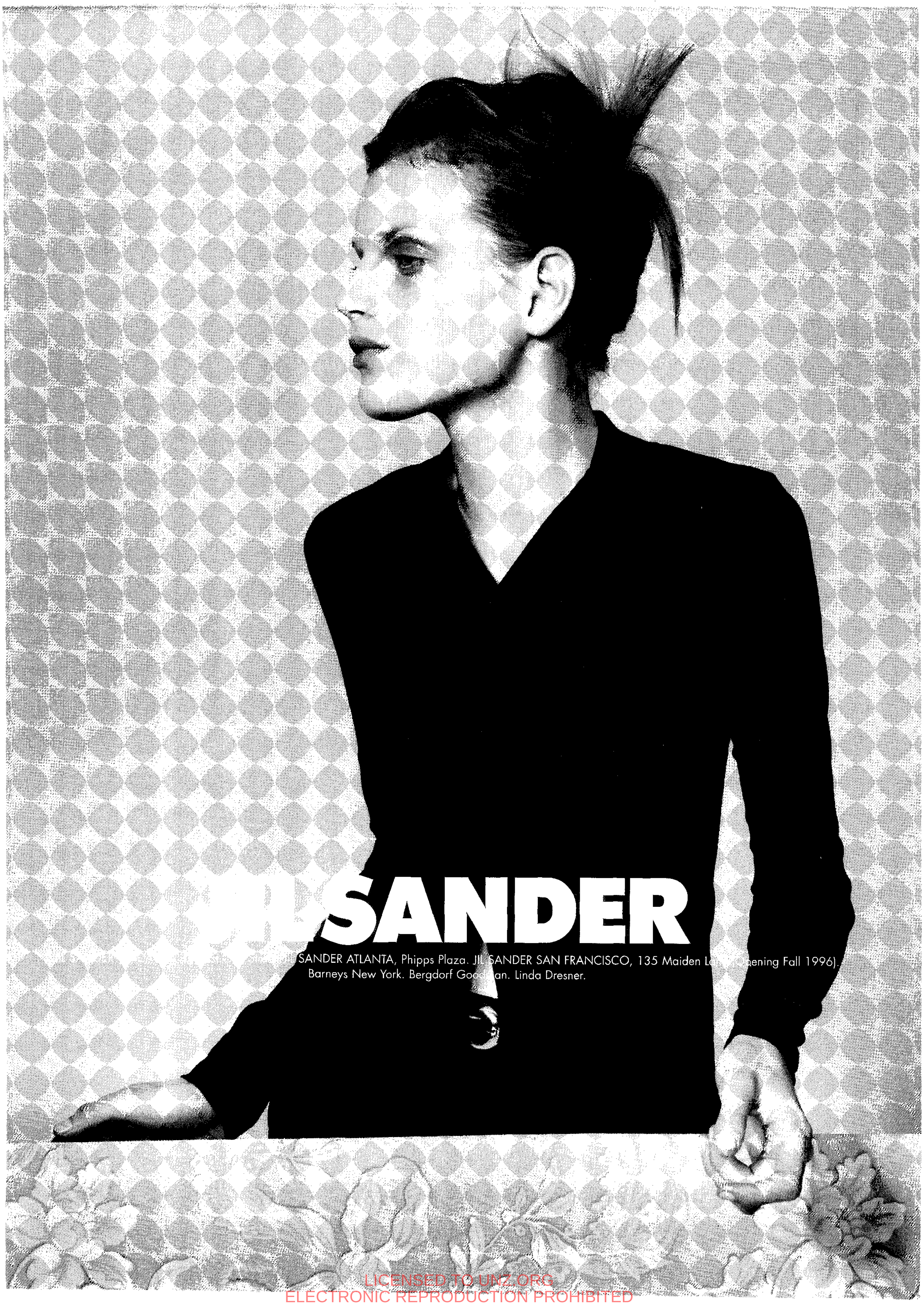
Diplomats and journalists who compare Burundi with Rwanda often speak of imminent genocide in Burundi. What they can't say is who is going to commit genocide against whom. For the fact is that Burundi is simply Burundi—a nation where extremism unleashes mass death, and mass death unleashes extremism. For some time now, there have been vague rumblings in the U.N. and in the Clinton Administration about readying an international force for deployment in case Burundi blows up. Considering how blown up the place already is, it's hard to imagine what kind of explosion that would be. In any event, no such force exists. Last month, the Security Council, after considering some "contingency plans" and batting around the idea of imposing an arms embargo and other, mostly symbolic sanctions on the belligerents, contented itself with issuing a call for Burundi's killers to stop killing.

The Security Council is scheduled to address the matter again on February 20th. At that time, Administration officials say, real action may be taken. Washington has let it be known that it will not send troops but, if anyone else wants to, the United States will provide "airlift and logistical support" as well as money; an all-African force is a favored idea. But no mission has been defined; no entry or exit strategies exist. There is no plan to deal with the fact that Burundi is what strategists call a "non-permissive environment," which means that both the government and the militias have said no foreign troops would be welcome.

"We had interventions in Liberia, Rwanda. . . . Were their problems solved?" Burundi's President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, a Hutu figurehead, whose primary political task is avoiding ouster or assassination, recently said to Reuters. In Burundi, "there is a tendency to eliminate other people," he went on. "So I do not see military intervention as any sort of solution." Antoine Nduwayo, the Prime Minister, a Tutsi, put things more bluntly in a New Year's address to the nation. Noting the spreading "ideology of exclusion and genocide," he warned of "an extremely difficult year" ahead, saying, "The war will be intensified. There will be a lot of suffering." He urged a mass mobilization for "a decisive offensive."

Yet there was President Clinton—"at the dawn," he said, "of a bright new century"—standing shoulder to shoulder with Chirac for peace, progress, and democracy in Burundi. The irony on the South Lawn that day was that France, which was the great friend and supporter of the genocidal Hutu forces in Rwanda, is one of the chief opponents of international intervention in Burundi. "Preventing the resurgence of centuries-old tribal conflicts is not in our power," a senior French official explained in the Washington *Post*. "We cannot support the burden of all that goes wrong in the world." That's blunt and uncharitable, yes—and disingenuous. But then so is America's cheery preparation for a future crisis that has already arrived. Think of Eliot's lines "Between the emotion / And the response / Falls the Shadow." The spotlight of American diplomatic concern is trained on that shadow. Behind it, Burundi is dying.

—PHILIP GOUREVITCH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# IN THE MAIL

## ROMAN NEW YORK?

Paul Berman's reference (in Comment, "Medieval New York," January 15th) to the "blood libel" charge made by medieval European Christians—that Jews murdered Christian children and used their blood in religious rituals—reminded me that, ironically, the blood libel was first used by the Romans against the early Christians. In his monumental history, Edward Gibbon writes that it was asserted by some Roman writers (and believed by many Romans) that at secret Christian ceremonies "a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of initiation, to the knife of the [Christian] proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the [Christian] sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt."

J. H. Poivan
Pennington, N.J.

## GENERATION AT RISK

Lawrence Wright's article on the decline of the health and wealth of the human sperm ("Silent Sperm," January 15th) indicated that recent generations of men, especially those in modern urban societies, have much lower sperm counts than do men of older generations or men in "non-Westernized" societies. He offered many reasonable explanations, but he neglected to explore a Darwinian theory. In modern urban societies, the two-child family ideal, realized by access to reliable birth-control methods, has effectively deactivated the mechanism of natural selection by making men with poor sperm just as likely to pass their genes on to the next generation as men with good sperm. In societies that are less influenced by family planning, men with healthy sperm will father more children than men with poor sperm. Under such conditions, Mother Nature will optimize the average sperm quality.

Jan Stengren
Culver City, Calif.

Mr. Wright raises the question of whether the human species is approaching a fertility crisis. That crisis is already here: last year, the world's population grew by about eighty-seven million people—to 5.7 billion—and ninety-five per cent of this growth took place in countries where many people live in brutal poverty.

Ronald W. Angel
Bellevue, Wash.

## DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION

Some readers of our article about a near-perfect counterfeit hundred-dollar bill ("The Supernote," October 23, 1995) have apparently misinterpreted the role of the imprisoned drug smuggler Peter Kattar in assisting a Secret Service investigation into the bogus currency. Kattar provided intelligence about the political climate in Lebanon which may have given rise to the counterfeit note, but his information was not about the counterfeiters themselves.

Fredric Dannen
Ira Silverman
New York City

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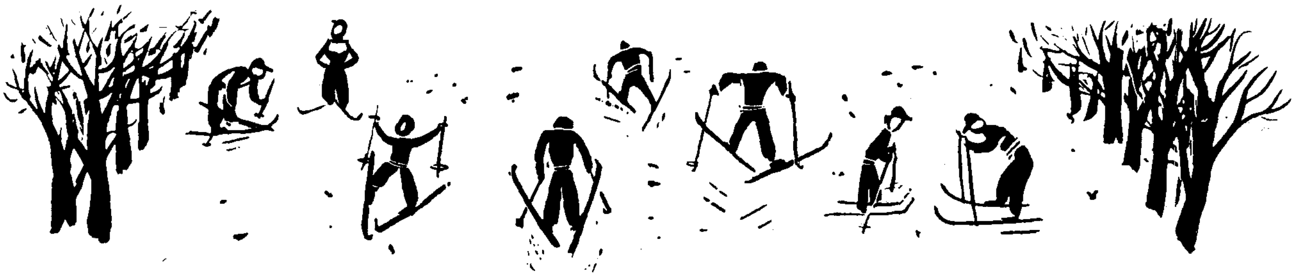

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| 18 | 19 | 20 | | | | |

### OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

*(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)*

**The African Company Presents Richard III**—Carlyle Brown's play, set in 1821, about a Manhattan theatre troupe founded by former slaves. Opens Feb. 15 at 7:30 and continues through Feb. 25. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 501-6093.)

**The Amazing Metrano: An Accidental Comedy**—Art Metrano gives an account of his recovery from a paralyzing injury in this one-man comedy. One preview on Feb. 14. Opens Feb. 15 at 7. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

**Bus Stop**—Mary-Louise Parker, Ron Perlman, and Billy Crudup lead the cast in a revival of William Inge's 1955 comedy-drama. Directed by Josephine R. Abady. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

**Dancing on Her Knees**—A new play by Nilo Cruz, set in Miami Beach on All Souls' Day, about a pair of former tango champions. With Franca Barchiesi and Paul Calderon. Directed by Graciela Daniele. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

**Du Barry Was a Lady**—Robert Morse and Faith Prince in a concert version of the 1939 Cole Porter musical. Four performances only: Feb. 15-16 at 8 and Feb. 17 at 2 and 8. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**Entertaining Mr. Sloane**—The Classic Stage Company's production of Joe Orton's 1964 black comedy, with Bryan Murray, Ellen Parker, George Hall, and Neil Maffin. In previews. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

**A Fair Country**—Laurence Luckinbill plays an American diplomat whose family (Judith Ivey, Dan Futterman, and Matt McGrath) disintegrates after he tries to put an end to their long assignment in South Africa, in a new play by Jon Robin Baitz. In previews through Feb. 18. Opens Feb. 19 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**Floyd Collins**—A new musical by Adam Guettel (score and lyrics) and Tina Landau (book), set in Kentucky in 1925 and based on a true story, about a farmer who is trapped in a cave and becomes the object of a rescue mission that draws national attention. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**Overtime**—A. R. Gurney's new work is a comic sequel to "The Merchant of Venice." The cast includes Nicholas Kepros, Joan McMurtrey, Jere Shea, Rocco Sisto, and Robert Stanton. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**Too Many Clothes**—Linda Hill's new one-woman show is a multimedia, multicharacter take on the significance of toggery. Audience members are invited to contribute their own cast-off clothing (it will later be given to charity) to the set. Feb. 15-17 at 8. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)

### OPENED RECENTLY

**The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria**—The Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal's 1967 comedy, about two men who develop an array of role-playing relationships—mother-child, torturer-victim, master-slave—while stranded on an island. Presented by the Independent Theatre Company. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088.)

**Bed and Sofa**—A young wife transfers her affections from her husband to his visiting war buddy, then ends up rejecting them both, in a musical comedy based on the Soviet director Abram Room's celebrated 1926 silent film. Both the play and the movie are set in Moscow in the nineteen-twenties, and both satirize imperious, possessive men and bourgeois customs. But only G. W. Mercier's chiaroscuro set captures the wit and charm of the movie. Neither Laurence Klavan's intertitle-like libretto nor Andre Ernotte's socialist realist staging draws out the potential of Polly Pen's playful score. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes Feb. 25.)

**Blue Window**—Craig Lucas's 1984 play centers on a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**Dick Gregory Live**—The master returns in a hilarious two-hour riff, skewering our fondest end-of-millennium hypocrisies and delusions with an astringent yet avuncular air. His bite, although it has mellowed with time, is still sharp as he ruminates on everything from Bosnia to O.J. to airplane travel. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 18.)

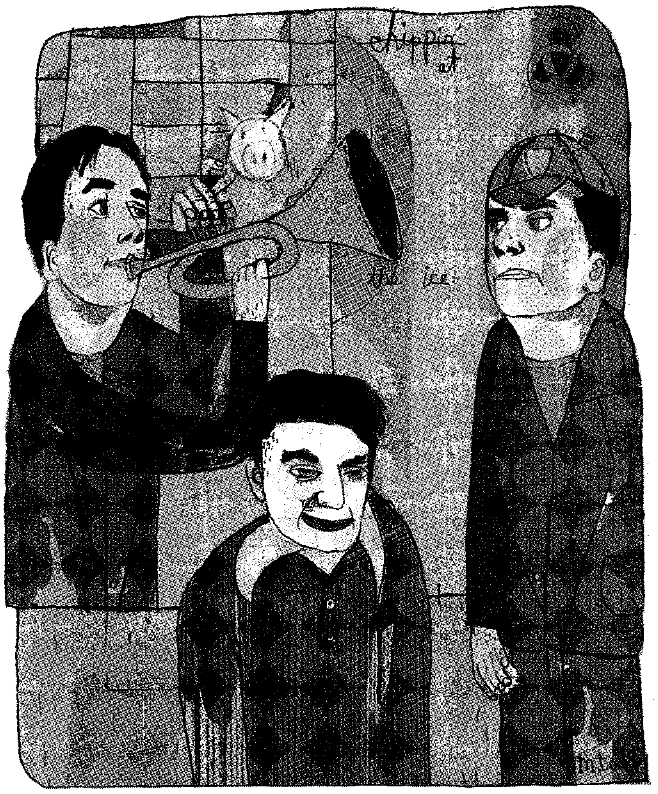
**An Epidog**—In the final segment of Mabou Mines and the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's multimedia trilogy, "Animations," the Bunraku puppet heroine Rose—a feminist canine—is laid to impermanent rest. Company regulars Frederick Neumann and Ruth Maleczech perform expertly as narrating deities. If only the howling, pop-mystical script came up to their level. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-9684. Closes Feb. 18.)

**The Father**—As the benighted protagonist of Strindberg's 1887 drama, Frank Langella is a revelation—he explores every forbidding corner of the play's brutal psychosexual universe. Gail Strickland, who plays Langella's wife (and enemy), is irritatingly difficult to understand—get out your ear trumpet. Angela Bettis, as the unhappy couple's daughter, brings just the right amount of creepy coyness to her part. Directed by Clifford Williams. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/29/96.) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Feb. 25.)

**The Flying Monkeys**—The improv troupe. Feb. 17 at 6. (Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St. 757-0788.)

**The Food Chain**—The situations in Nicky Silver's play are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

**Frank Pig Says Hello**—A nightmarish mood pervades Patrick McCabe's tale of a young boy's descent into madness, but it's tempered by a manic humor that makes the awful bearable. (The play opens on a monstrous orange moon suspended in darkness, accompanied by a melancholy trumpet and offstage snorts.) Portraying not only the adult Frank, who narrates, but also every other friend, relative, and townsman and -woman that his younger self, Piglet, encounters, Sean Rocks gives



*Sean Rocks (left and right) and David Gorry, in "Frank Pig Says Hello."*

MARK TODD

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an amazing performance; David Gorry is compelling as Piglet, a sad, tic-laden, clownlike figure whose belief that he is a pig is merely one symptom of a mind spinning out of control. The pace can be exhausting and the story confusing (it's not clear whether some scenes are real or imagined, and who the hell is Alo?), but the production, directed by Joe O'Byrne, is excellent and inventive, and the performances are something to see. Adapted by Mr. McCabe from his novel "The Butcher Boy." (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Feb. 18.)

**The Grey Zone**—Tim Blake Nelson's disjointed but shockingly powerful story of the Sonderkommandos—Jews who worked in the gas chambers and crematoria of the death camps—in a nearly flawless production. Among the finest components are Douglas Hughes's assured direction, David Van Tieghem's eerie, evocative sound design, and Gus Rogerson's blistering performance as one of the organizers of a rebellion. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes Feb. 24.)

*"Blue Window," at Manhattan Theatre Club.*

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

**The Hairy Ape**—A limited-run production of Eugene O'Neill's 1921 drama, presented by the Wooster Group. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes Feb. 18.)

**Jam On the Groove**—Ten loose-limbed numbers show off the impressive range of hip-hop choreography, and the house rocks with a sort of call-and-response encouragement from the audience. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

**King Lear**—The New York Shakespeare Festival presents a clear and beautiful production. Jared Harris gives a boastful, sad performance as the evil Edmund and Rob Campbell a tender one as his patient and virtuous brother, Edgar. Jeffrey Wright is an affecting Fool, and Thomas Hill seems to embody oblivious innocence in the role of Gloucester. What's missing is a monarch of stature: early on F. Murray Abraham lacks the voice, the power, and the posture to project the blinding ego that betrays the king, and so his fall seems a short one. Directed by Adrian Hall. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Feb. 18.)

**Master Class**—Zoe Caldwell portrays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction in Terrence McNally's latest play, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**Measure for Measure**—In Barry Kyle's stark, stunning production, Shakespeare's 1604 exploration of morality and law plays like an up-to-the-minute commentary on our own public controversies over religion and the family. Presented by Theatre for a New Audience. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 17.)

**Mrs. Klein**—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory in Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

**Molly Sweeney**—Brian Friel's 1994 play owes much to an Oliver Sacks case study, but Friel didn't reimagine the material, and the play, which he directed, comes across as a staged reading of an essay. The three actors—Catherine Byrne, as the blind Molly, Jason Robards, as the doctor who hopes to make her see again, and Alfred Molina, as Molly's foolish, blustery husband—sit or stand and address the audience, and they all end up overexplaining themselves. (1/29/96) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

**Moon Over Buffalo**—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**North 17th Street**—A dream play by Clay Goss, about a sleepwalking preadolescent boy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd. 594-2370.)

**The One-Minute Play Contest**—A fun and frenzied competition in which audience enthusiasm and a decibel metre decide which sixty-second drama gets the grand prize (two hundred clams). Feb. 17 at 7:30 and 9:30. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 279-4200.)

**Picasso at the Lapin Agile**—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, features Einstein and Picasso, sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world; it contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

**Rent**—Puccini's "La Bohème" was the inspiration for the late Jonathan Larson's new musical, about a group of young East Villagers. (Reviewed in this issue.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes March 3.)

**Sheba**—The Queen of the fabled nation of Sheba visits Israel and falls in love with King Solomon, in a musical that relies heavily on baubles, bangles, and beads. The production numbers are tightly directed, and the actors are beautiful (especially Tamara Tunie, who plays the Queen) and talented. But in the end, though the tunes are pleasant enough they don't resonate beyond the theatre doors. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

**The Universe**—In Richard Foreman's latest mind-wrenching vaudeville, three cheerfully desperate oddballs (James Urbaniak, Tony Torn, and Mary McBride) attempt to discover universal truths, behave normally, and find love in a thoroughly unknowable, abnormal, and inhospitable world. As usual, Foreman encumbers his actors with a funhouse set and delightfully unwieldy props. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

**Victor/Victoria**—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

**Virgins and Other Myths**—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life"—is an explicit though graceful dive into the depths of his own psyche. He shuttles between a chronological narrative and psychological milestones in his life, now and then stopping to wonder just when it was, exactly, that he lost his virginity. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Feb. 25.)

**The Winter's Tale**—The Pearl Theatre Company offers Shakespeare's tragicomedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

**WordFire Festival**—Final performances in the Watermark Theatre's annual solo-performance shindig. Feb. 16 and Feb. 18 at 7:30: Susan Miller in "My Left Breast," which deals with her mastectomy. . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 9:30 and Feb. 17 at 7:30: Dael Orlandersmith in "Characters in Motion," a piece about the lives of city dwellers. (66 Wooster St. 966-9290.)

**Working Class**—Almost every one of the eight laborers that Richard Hoehler portrays in his one-man show is disenchanted; he aims to put humble yet heroic faces on the nation's workers, but he barely penetrates the experience of his subjects, leaving their personalities as sketchy as the category "working class" itself. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434.)

**The Yiddish Trojan Women**—Three strong-willed Jewish women and their Polish refugee grandmother (girlishly played by Joanna Merlin) suffer the consequences of personal and political choices against the background of Brooklyn in the Age of Reagan. Invoking Euripides' Trojan women as mirrors for lives disrupted by desire and holocaust, playwright Carol Braverman extends Arthur Miller's brand of moral realism with meaty, intelligent female roles. Although the energy flags at times, the women's performances are accomplished and well balanced, and the lust object is appealingly embodied by Hugh O'Gorman. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes Feb. 18.)

## LONG RUNS

**AFTER-PLAY:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. (Closes Feb. 25.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Doug-

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las Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

## DANCE

**New York City Ballet**—Feb. 14 at 8: "The Waltz Project," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Romeo and Juliet," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: "Touch." It isn't easy to see how choreographer David Parsons can pack all the ideas he alludes to in conversation—the upheavals of the last two generations, lengthening life spans, postponed pregnancies, gay liberation—into one dance. But when the talk turns to his newest work, they snap into place under the larger theme of tolerance in a world of shifting relationships. This modern dancer of notable upper-body abandon has choreographed the piece for a cast of eight dancers trained in ballet's quick, intricate footwork. "In classical technique," he explains, "there are stops: you step, prepare, turn. But I give dancers what I call squiggles—there are no stops in a squiggle. It's almost like someone taking a paintbrush and never letting it leave the paper." With "Prodigal Son" and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 8: "Coppélia." . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 2: "Touch," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," "Calcium Light Night," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 3: "Coppélia." . . . ¶ Feb. 20 at 8: "Touch," "The Waltz Project," and "Symphony in Three Movements." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 25.)

**"To Bite an Orange with Its Peel"**—Neta Pulvermacher's Danspace program takes its title from its first work, in which the dancers, costumed in pale, orange-blossom colors, move in front of bright projections of sliced oranges. "It's almost a naïve beauty," the choreographer says. "It's love at its most infatuating, love in beauty and balance—you want to eat it." Another piece presents what she calls "the other side of the story." As her dancers rehearse the pretzelly solos and flickering movements, half drowning, half ecstatic, of "Long Story Short," her collaboration with photographer Dona Ann McAdams, she explains, "After the infatuation's over comes the daily grind: you hope the great meaning is going to accrue." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 15-18 at 8:30.)

**Erick Hawkins Dance Company**—Two years after the death of its founder, the company forges on, with current repertory ("Plains Daybreak," "Intensities of Space, and Wind," "Cantilever Two," among others) and a revival ("Today, with Dragon," from 1986). (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 14-16 at 8, Feb. 17 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

**Lucy Guerin**—The choreographer dances with Rebecca Hilton and Nikki Castro in "Venus Bay," a première that draws on recollections of her childhood on a remote farm in southern Australia. With "Incarnadine," performed by Guerin, Castro, Hilton, Sarah Perron, and Mia Lawrence. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 14-17 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 3.)

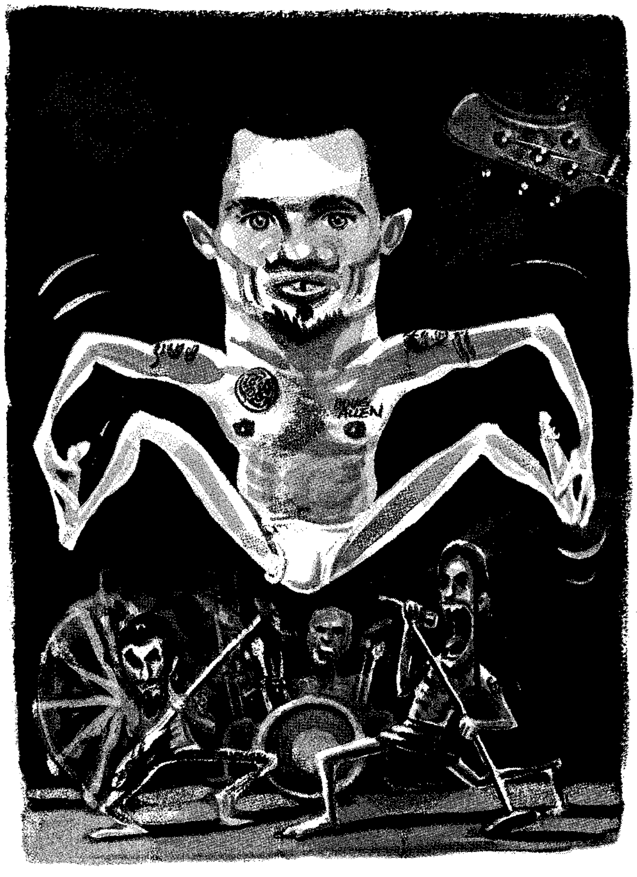
**"Works and Process at the Guggenheim"**—As dancers perform Peter Martins' latest work, "Reliquary," the ballet master in chief of the New York City Ballet comments on this homage to the collaboration of George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Feb. 19 at 8.)

## NIGHT LIFE

### CONCERTS

**Ray Davies**—With the possible exception of The Who's Pete Townshend, Brother Ray is the first British Invasion rocker to segue gracefully into middle age. Last year he put the Kinks on hiatus and released a wonderful quasi-autobiography called "X-Ray" (written in the third person, with a protagonist called R.D.) and embarked on a book tour that turned out to be a solo acoustic gig interspersed with a handful of lively readings. Now the fifty-one-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee is back with "20th Century Man," a fleshed-out theatrical version of the acoustic book tour. The flesh consists of two acts, stage and lobby trimmings, and a parlor-piano player—"Barnum & Bailey stuff," according to Davies. "It's not like I'm going out there with a script and Trevor Nunn. In fact, this really isn't much different from anything I do with the Kinks." After a moment's thought he adds, "I haven't got the mime together, though." Far more influential than he's usually credited with being (even Townshend admits that he stole from the Kinks), this great songwriter should be as incorrigible as ever. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Feb. 14-16 at 7:30, Feb. 17 at 6:30 and 10, and Feb. 18 at 7:30.)

**Freddie Jackson, Ashford & Simpson, and Isaac Hayes**—Thanks to a string of hit ballads in the eighties (and the decline of Barry White), Jackson was once considered Luther Vandross's only competition for the Artist Most Likely to Be Played During Foreplay Award. Then his material turned formulaic and lugubrious, which was a shame: when the tune was right—the up-tempo "Jam Tonight," for instance—his tremulous tenor could be unusually affecting. No such qualms about Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson, the Rodgers and Hart of Motown. Back in the late sixties, this husband-and-wife duo penned and produced such classics as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing" before leaving Gordyville for a plush contract with Warner Brothers. Although their subsequent recorded work has been spotty (their last major hit was "Solid," in 1985), their live appearances are still thrilling. But the true thrill will be Black Moses himself, Mr. Isaac Hayes. A former house producer and writer for Stax, Hayes was responsible for such Sam & Dave hits as "Soul Man" and "When Something Is Wrong with My Baby." He later put out a series of gritty funk albums which culminated, of course, in the mega-platinum, Academy Award-winning "Theme from Shaft." Bad films and uneven records followed, but Hayes made a stunning comeback last year with two fine disks: "Branded" and the instrumental "Raw and Refined." When this bald icon steps up to the mike, there won't be a still heart in the house. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Feb. 14 at 7:30.)



*The Red Hot Chili Peppers, at Nassau Coliseum.*

DOUG ALLEN

**A Salute to Marian McPartland**—The grande dame of mainstream piano has been a force on the New York scene for more than five decades. A cross-generational array of talent—including bassist Christian McBride, pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Howard Alden, trumpeter Randy Sandke, saxophonist Rickey Woodard, and drummer Al Harewood—gathers to acknowledge her quiet strength. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Feb. 15 at 8.)

**Cypress Hill**—This heavy-toking Los Angeles-based trio has become a huge act by following the dictum "Write about what you know." Lead rapper B-Real once described his breakthrough as a lyricist by recalling the poignant moment when he realized, "Shit, I get high every day—I can talk about weed!" Add a soupçon of Beastie Boys-style sarcasm and a dose of slow-motion bravado and you've got the perfect formula to enrage any parent. The band's latest record is called "III: Temples of Boom." (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St. 247-0200. Feb. 15 at 8. . . . ¶ Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Feb. 16 at 7:30.)

**Iron Maiden**—As one of the great big-haired heavy-metal bands of the eighties, Maiden distinguished itself from its colleagues (Judas Priest, Mötley Crüe, et al.) in two notable ways: by using cover art à la "Tales from the Crypt" which featured Eddie, a monstrous grinning corpse whose visage is now often crudely replicated on high-school denim jackets; and by having almost all their songs written by the bass player, Steve Harris, a practice that gave the music a particularly satisfying rumble. Though the band members are reputed to be well into their forties, word on the street is they still look good in spandex. With Fear Factory. Indeed. (Academy, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Feb. 16 at 8.)

**Red Hot Chili Peppers**—With their bare chests and thumping athleticism, the Chili Peppers have a tendency to come off like funk-rock Fabios, but the diverse songwriting and surprisingly grownup sentiments on "One Hot Minute," their latest album, may help change that. The addition of former Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro, an adept and versatile player, and production by the bearded rock guru Rick Rubin have emboldened the band, making this hodgepodge of jazz, speed-freak thrash, and pop sophistication easily

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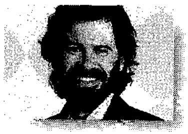

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their most potent effort. Their fine 1991 single, "Under the Bridge," is rivalled here on several uncommonly restrained tracks, particularly "Tearjerker," a striking eulogy to Kurt Cobain. With Silverchair and the Rentals. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Feb. 16 at 7:30.)

**GRACE BUMBRY BLACK MUSICAL HERITAGE ENSEMBLE**—The opera singer presents an evening of spirituals and gospel music. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 16 at 8.)

**ANDY STATMAN KLEZMER ORCHESTRA**—This master musician plays bluegrass and Eastern European soul music with equal aplomb. Long before klezmer was hip, Statman was reaching back to the shtetls with his mournful clarinet and pushing forward to the New World with his mandolin fusions. When a man has honed his craft at bar mitzvahs and brisses, you know he's the real deal. Bring a hanky to dab your eyes with and comfortable shoes for dancing in the aisle. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 17 at 8.)

**EVERCLEAR**—With the confessional ferocity that became Nirvana's signature, this Portland, Oregon, trio makes hard pop that leaves you misty-eyed for the early days of grunge. After a year of solid touring, the band has a hit with "Sparkle and Fade," a disk on which it powers through fourteen brutally melodic songs. Singer-guitarist Art Alexakis—a reformed junkie turned rock-and-roll dad—eloquently dissects, among other things, his delinquent youth and the drug-related deaths of his girlfriend and brother. (Academy. Feb. 18 at 8.)

**TIBET HOUSE BENEFIT**—Performers scheduled to attend include Laurie Anderson, Emmylou Harris, Philip Glass, and Natalie Merchant. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 19 at 7:30.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

*(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)*

**ALGONQUIN HOTEL**, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Guitarist and vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI** is in through early March. Dining.

**BLUE NOTE**, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Feb. 18: **TITO PUENTE'S GOLDEN LATIN JAZZ ALL-STARS**. Puente, the grand old man of salsa, loves his jazz, too. Rhythmic excitement is guaranteed: the guy's timbales could make a polka band swing. **BETTY CARTER** and her quartet take over on Feb. 20. Dining.

**BRADLEY'S**, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Feb. 17: the **VICTOR LEWIS** trio, featuring **STEPHEN SCOTT** on piano. Drummers don't come any sharper than Lewis: as subtle as he is incisive, with a rhythmic kick akin to a low-level hurricane, he plays his instrument as if it were a piano, extracting shades of color from all over his kit. He's also a canny composer and a more than capable bandleader. **DONALD BROWN, JAVON JACKSON**, and **IRA COLEMAN** have the stage starting Feb. 19. Dining.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and (through Feb. 21) the legendary **EARTHA KITT**.

**IRIDIUM**, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Feb. 18: the **DOROTHY DONEGAN** trio. Now in her seventies, Donegan can still scare your pants off with her wild, free-association piano discourses. She'll try anything, even the impossible, interpolating classical themes into Tin Pan Alley, slinging off Tatum volleys, and romping through stride passages when the spirit moves her. It's on-the-edge stuff. The **TERENCE BLANCHARD** quintet takes over the bandstand on Feb. 20. Dining.

**KNICKERBOCKER**, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Feb. 14-17: **RENEE ROSNES** and **LARRY GRENADIER**. Canadian expatriate Rosnes has blossomed into a first-rate bop pianist with a crisp attack and a delightful aversion to clichés. Her sympathetic rhythm mate will be bassist Larry Grenadier, who plays with her in the band Native Colors.

**RAINBOW & STARS**, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—It's February—time again for **ROSEMARY CLOONEY**. (Too bad February is the shortest month of the year.) Forty-five years after her first big hit, "Come On-a My House," Clooney's voice is still warm and welcoming. In performance, she's fresh and bouncy and funny, and, like Tony Bennett, she's been attracting an ever broadening audience of hipsters. Her new record, "Dedicated to Nelson," reprises the classic big-band arrangements Nelson Riddle wrote for her nineteen-fifties variety show. She appears with a fourteen-piece band, featuring her longtime musical director, John Oddo. Closed Mondays.

**TAVERN ON THE GREEN**, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—**JIMMY SCOTT** is in command through Feb. 18. With good reason, the singer has dropped the "Little" that used to front his name—there's nothing diminutive about his talent. Even on songs you've heard dozens of times before, Scott makes you listen for the next lyric as if it were a password to love and happiness. Dining.

## TABLES FOR TWO

*Dining around town*

**SHOPSIN'S GENERAL STORE**, 63 Bedford St. (924-5160)—No one comes to this funky luncheonette for the amenities. With its ragtag décor and its ceiling-high shelves jammed with ketchup, soy sauce, and pickle jars, Shopsin's may be the ugliest great place to eat in Manhattan. Run with maddening we-flunked-economics glee by Eve and Kenny Shopsin, this is the definitive mom-and-pop operation: on any given evening you may find yourself waiting for a table while the Shopsin kids (who also happen to be the staff) do their homework.

So why do people flock here in droves, fighting for a blue-vinyl banquette or a rickety bar stool along the soda fountain? Perhaps it's because they all love Shopsin's raison d'être, soup, which can be sampled here in more than a hundred different varieties, all prepared fresh to order from a small selection of pre-made stocks. Highlights of chef Kenny's concoctions (it would be impossible to list them all) include lamb-rutabaga, oxtail-turnip, sweet potato-jalapeño, and the ferocious cream of garlic (bring a toothbrush).

A regular sits down beside you, and Kenny steps out from the kitchen to chat about his motorcycle. The guy orders "the usual"; moments later, you're trying to match the steaming vat on his table with its corresponding tally on the menu. Don't worry—people love to brag about their favorites. And what goes better with hot soup than a foot-long wedge of butter-broiled bread, slathered with an exotic topping like pear-prosciutto-currant or chicken-pecan-cilantro-Jack? Make sure you get there before eight; at five after, a metal gate is already blocking the entrance, and Eve is hovering over your table, saying, "What, no room for dessert?" (Open weekdays 12-3 for lunch and 6-8 for dinner; closed weekends. Entrées $4-$15.)

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The **ART FARMER** quintet wraps up a two-week run on Feb. 18. Farmer's work proves that urbanity has its place even in jazz's spontaneous, emotional universe. By picking the perfect notes and playing them with a burnished elegance born of utter precision, the flugelhornist makes virtues of control and calculation: his sophisticated, ardent playing distills bop down to a purely lyrical state. The **JACKY TERRASSON** trio owns the room from Feb. 20. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

**VISIONES**, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Feb. 14-17: The **GEORGE MRAZ** quartet. Mraz, a great bassist, is a team player who has been expertly reading the minds of innumerable pianists and hornmen for years. (Tommy Flanagan and Joe Henderson are recent employers.) Intelligence, taste, and wicked chops inform everything he does. Hearing him front his own band should be an agreeable shock.

## ROCK, ETC.

**BOTTOM LINE**, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Feb. 15: Folk-rock goddess **CATIE CURTIS**.

**BROWNIES**, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Feb. 15-16: Giant Sand. Feb. 20: Mars Needs Women.

**FEZ**, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Feb. 16-17: Now in its third year, the **LOSER'S LOUNGE**—having already embraced such kitsch icons as Burt Bacharach, Lee Hazlewood, and Henry Mancini in affectionate tribute shows starring local indie rockers (with the odd appearance by Debbie Harry)—continues to comb the cutout bins. This time around, the Kustard Kings provide the musical backdrop as various Losers re-create the madcap career of John Lennon's favorite drinking buddy, Harry Nilsson. Perhaps best known for "Everybody's Talking," from "Midnight Cowboy" (not to mention the theme song for "The Courtship of Eddie's Father"), Nilsson hit his dubious stride with "(Put de Lime in de) Coconut" and went on to anticipate the punk era with the joyously anthemic chorus "You're breakin' my heart / You're tearin' it apart / So fuck you." Sit back, take a sip of your Martini, and enjoy your own lost weekend. Dining.

**IRVING PLAZA**, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Feb. 17: **THE RAKE'S PROGRESS**. It might be pretentious to name your band after a series of engravings by an eighteenth-century English satirist, but when a band's founding members are from the pastoral manors of Westchester County, some things can't be helped. Lucky for vocalist Tim Cloherty, guitarist Gregg Lapkin, and the rest of the group, a stint on the Lower East Side has paid sonic dividends. They also know how to drink beer onstage and lead the crowd through chant-along obscenities. Feb. 20: A Mardi Gras party featuring former Talking Heads **CHRIS FRANTZ, TINA WEYMOUTH, AND JERRY HARRISON.**

**MERCURY LOUNGE**, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Feb. 14: Up-and-coming alternative star **WALT MINK**. Feb. 17: **LOUD LUCY**. Feb. 19: Transplanted British guitarist **FRANCIS DUNNERY** has employed a novel setup during his recent "residencies" at small clubs: acoustic guitar and laptop—the better to remember freshly written lyrics. With his anchor plunked down here for a month of Mondays, he's likely to be working through a new batch of songs in progress. Let's hope they're as quirky and absorbing as the ones on his recent album, "Tall Blonde Helicopter."

**S.O.B.'S**, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

**TRAMPS**, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Feb. 14: A benefit for the Johnny Copeland heart fund with **CLARENCE (GATEMOUTH) BROWN** and **JAMES COTTON**. Feb. 17: Blues greats **JOHN HAMMOND** and **DUKE ROBILLARD**.

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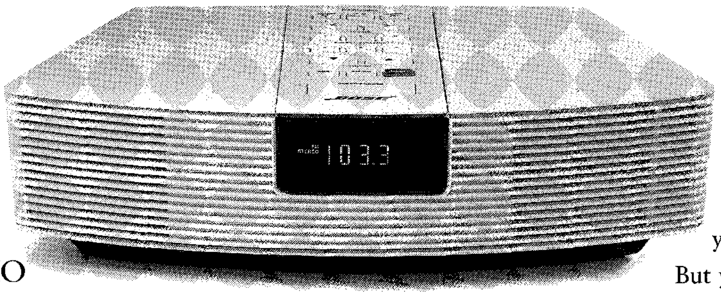

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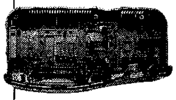

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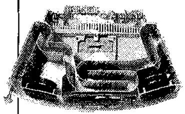

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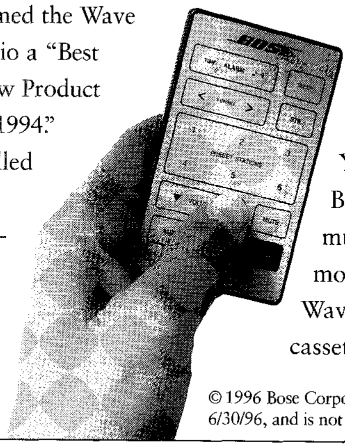

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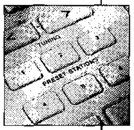

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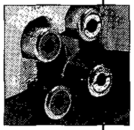

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# ART

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**Metropolitan Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Fabergé in America." In 1885, the warrant of "Supplier to the Imperial Court" was bestowed upon the House of Fabergé, and the rest is legend. The St. Petersburg jeweler and goldsmith Peter Carl Fabergé and his master craftsmen designed thousands of decorative objects and fantasy creations using such precious and semiprecious materials as colored gold, platinized silver, gems, malachite, ivory, and lapis lazuli. The most celebrated by far are the imperial Easter eggs, commissioned first by Alexander III, for his czarina, and later by Nicholas II. Fifteen of the forty-four extant eggs can be found in this exhibit of works from American collections, which also includes more than four hundred baskets, vases, table clocks, cigarette boxes, and other delights. Starts Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Poussin: Works on Paper." Sixty-five sketches and careful preparatory studies by the founder of French Classicism, from the collection of Queen Elizabeth II. Through March 31. . . . ¶ A complementary exhibit of seventeenth-century French drawings from the museum's collection is also on display. . . . ¶ The museum's African galleries have reopened, after a nine-month renovation; on view are more than four hundred works from the kingdoms of Benin, Owo, Ijebu, Danhomé, Bangwa, and many others. . . . ¶ "Haute Couture." Detail and tailoring are the focus in the Costume Institute's examination of high fashion since 1870, from Worth to Lacroix. Through March 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**Museum of Modern Art,** 11 W. 53rd St.—An installation of twenty-four Brancusi masterworks is on display; fourteen are from the Georges Pompidou Center, in Paris, the rest from MOMA's collection. Through April 23. . . . ¶ A large retrospective of black-and-white photographs from the late forties to the present by Roy DeCarava. Among the subjects are jazz musicians, street and subway life, and urban civil-rights protests. Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Sol LeWitt Prints, 1970-1995." Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Michael Schmidt: U-NI-TY," a hundred black-and-white photographs by the Berlin native. The theme—reunification—is clear, but the presentation is oblique. Half of the pictures are Schmidt's; the other half are images rephotographed from newspapers, magazines, and propaganda literature. Through March 26. . . . ¶ The "Projects" series presents knitted and embroidered works by Oliver Herring and Leonilson. Through March 12. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

**Guggenheim Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline." A hundred and forty paintings and sculptures, with special sections on Kandinsky, Mondrian, Pollock, Rothko, Martin, Hesse, Serra, Puryear, and several others. Through May 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

**Whitney Museum of American Art,** Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Joseph Cornell: Cosmic Travels." Box constructions and collages from the fifties and sixties by America's homegrown Surrealist. Through March 10. (Another show of Cornell's work is at C & M, 45 E. 78th St., through March 2.) (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

**American Museum of Natural History,** Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Amber: Window to the Past." Since the Mesolithic Period (9000-6000 B.C.), human beings have carved amulets out of fossilized tree resin. But all sorts of things—butterflies, tree frogs, geckos—were getting stuck in amber at a considerably earlier date; the oldest known fossils (on view here) are entrapped in ninety-four-million-year-old amber from New Jersey. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**Brooklyn Museum,** Eastern Parkway—"A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

**Bard Graduate Center,** 18 W. 86th St.—"A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival." Pugin (1812-52) left his mark on many of England's cathedrals, public buildings, and furnishings with his architectural and interior designs. He was responsible for every aspect of the fittings and decoration for the rebuilt Houses of Parliament (1834), from chandeliers to wallpaper to stained glass. The House of Commons Chair, the House of Lords Chair, and the Coronation Cup are here, along with ceramics, metalwork, textiles, and drawings from the rest of his short but illustrious career. Through Feb. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8:30.)

**Dahesh Museum,** Fifth Ave. at 49th St.—An institution devoted to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century academic art from the collection of the Lebanese writer Salim Moussa Achi (1909-84), who, at the age of twenty, adopted the name Dr. Dahesh ("inspiring wonder"). "Cupids: Flights of Fancy, Love, and Mischief" offers forty paintings, sculptures, and decorative objects (several of which are on loan from other museums and collectors) that make use of Venus's mischievous son. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

**Museo del Barrio,** Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—Two works by the writer and filmmaker Leandro Katz. A few dozen photographs and a large photo-based installation are on view from "The Catherwood Project," a decade-long endeavor that produced twenty-seven hundred photographs attempting to reconstruct the 1839 and 1841 expeditions of John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood to Maya centers in Guatemala, Honduras, and the Yucatán. The aim is to excavate the assumptions and perceptions of the two travellers, the first English-speaking explorers of the region. The second work, titled "Project for the Day You'll Love Me" (after the famous Argentinean tango), is concerned with the last eleven months in the life of Che Guevara. Through May 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

**Studio Museum in Harlem,** 144 W. 125th St.—"Explorations in the City of Light" presents paintings and sculptures by seven African-American artists who lived in Paris between 1945 and 1965: Edward Clark, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Harold Cousins, Beauford Delaney, Herbert Gentry, Lois Mailou Jones, and Larry Potter. . . . ¶ "The Listening Sky," a display of works in the museum's new sculpture garden. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

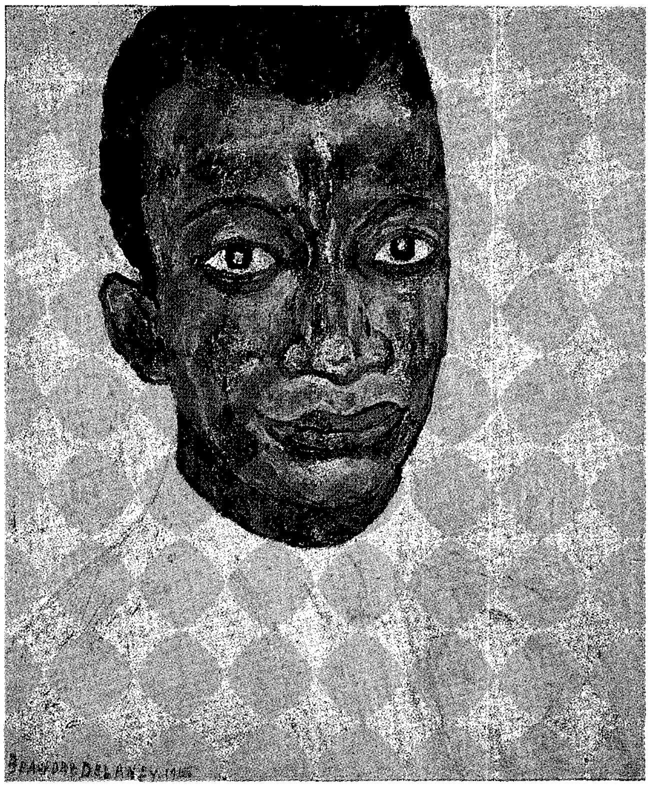
## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

*(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)*

**Pierre Bonnard** (1867-1947)—Watercolors and pastels by the master colorist, who possessed a nervous passion for drawing everything he saw around him. Through March 23. (Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. Open Mondays.)

**Richmond Burton**—Paintings and works on paper by an abstractionist who has recently begun to abandon the underlying grid structure that he once favored, but whose motifs still pulse rhythmically throughout the canvases. The artist's calculatedly unpleasant palette (fleshy pinks, malarial yellows, nail-polish fuchsias) insists that these works are something more than just pretty paintings. Some of the patterning, as in "Monster" and "Valentine" (both 1995), suggests sixties fashions—the artist's blobs and curlicues are vaguely reminiscent of Pucci. Through March 2. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

**Stephen Ellis**—Arid though highly intelligent oil paintings that take modernism apart and put it back together again according to a post-modernist rule book. Layers of Hofmann-esque rectangles in primary colors hover above wiggly scrolls and smears that have a silk-screened look. The effect is Abstract Expressionism without the soul—which is one definition of aesthetic nothingness. Through Feb. 24. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)



*James Baldwin, by Beauford Delaney, in "Explorations in the City of Light," at the Studio Museum in Harlem.*

**Mimmo Rotella**—Talk about keeping the faith: at seventy-seven, the godfather of graffiti art is still at it. These works on poster billboards (taken from the streets) vary from bold geometric cutouts to elaborately overpainted cartoons. "Roma Roma," a crude depiction of Romulus and Remus being suckled by the she-wolf, could be called Haringesque if Rotella hadn't been doing this when Keith Haring's parents were still dating. Through Feb. 24. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

**"New York Folk"**—New York City has produced its share of self-taught visionaries, too. This well-curated, well-annotated exhibit of paintings by Lawrence Lebduska (1894-

1966), Abraham Levin (1880-1957), and Israel Litwak (1868-1960) brims with fantastic invention and exuberant fun. In one of Lebduska's imaginary landscapes, pandas frolic in a pastoral countryside that looks a lot like Connecticut. Levin, who was born in Russia, paints scenes of village life with an intense vision and a sophisticated palette that suggest Chagall. Litwak's fussily detailed architectural studies have a distinctly postmodernist banality. Through March 16. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

**"OUT OF 'TOON"**—Works on paper, along with a few paintings and sculptures, by artists whose inspiration has been shaped by cartoons and comic strips: David Sandlin, Peter Saul, Robbie Conal, China Marks, H. C. Westermann, and others. Through Feb. 28. (Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

**"THE HUMAN BODY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SCULPTURE"**—Works from the past forty years, by both sculptors and painters. Artists with pieces on view include Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Willem de Kooning, Eric Fischl, Robert Gober, Charles Ray, David Salle, Kiki Smith, and Robert Therrien. Through March 2. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

**"THE HOUSE TRANSFORMED"**—A wide-ranging exhibit that turns up some fine work: a Joel Shapiro sculpture so tiny that you might step on it by accident; a classy pair of altered photographs by the ubiquitous Gerhard Richter; a witty wire-mesh construction by H. C. Westermann; a handsome architectural study by Richard Artschwager; and, best of all, a stunning photograph by Peter Garfield of a "mobile" home flying through a night sky—an updated Auntie Em's farmhouse. Through March 2. (Mathes, 41 E. 57th St.)

**SHORT LIST**—**ANDRÁS BÖRÖCZ,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. Through March 9. . . . **ALEXANDER CALDER,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **GRETNA CAMPBELL,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through March 2. . . . **LOIS DODD,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. Through March 2. . . . **MARY FRANK,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through March 9. . . . **SIDNEY GOODMAN,** Dintenfass, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **ADOLPH GOTTLIEB,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through March 9. . . . **DAN GRAHAM,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **A. R. PENCK,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through Feb. 24. . . . **MILTON RESNICK** and **JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 9. . . . **JOSÉ MARÍA SICILIA,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **EVE SONNEMAN,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Through Feb. 24.

### GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**ELLEN GALLAGHER**—Subdued, rather sombre abstractions à la Agnes Martin—or at least that's the initial impression one gets from these works by a young painter who was one of the few genuine surprises at last year's Whitney Biennial. Closer inspection reveals something stranger going on: waves of smiling, thick-lipped mouths, cascades of eyeballs, even the occasional schematic rendering of a woman's head or a forlorn elephant complicate the paintings' sensuous, fussed-over surfaces. Through Feb. 24. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

**ALLEN RUPPERSBERG / LARRY JOHNSON**—An intelligently organized show that brings together a pair of kindred spirits from two generations of California Conceptualism. Ruppersberg is still probably best known for two early-seventies works in which he laboriously hand-copied, on multiple canvases, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and "Walden" in their entirety. In these recent silk screens and photographs, he continues to concentrate on the experience of reading, this time as it pertains to cinema; a sly humor prevails, although it takes sustained concentration to appreciate the pictures' muted poetry and seemingly chance structures. Johnson also works the territory between reading and unmediated seeing: his electrically colored photographs (yes, photographs) of often very funny texts—some of them situated in cartoon landscapes—both

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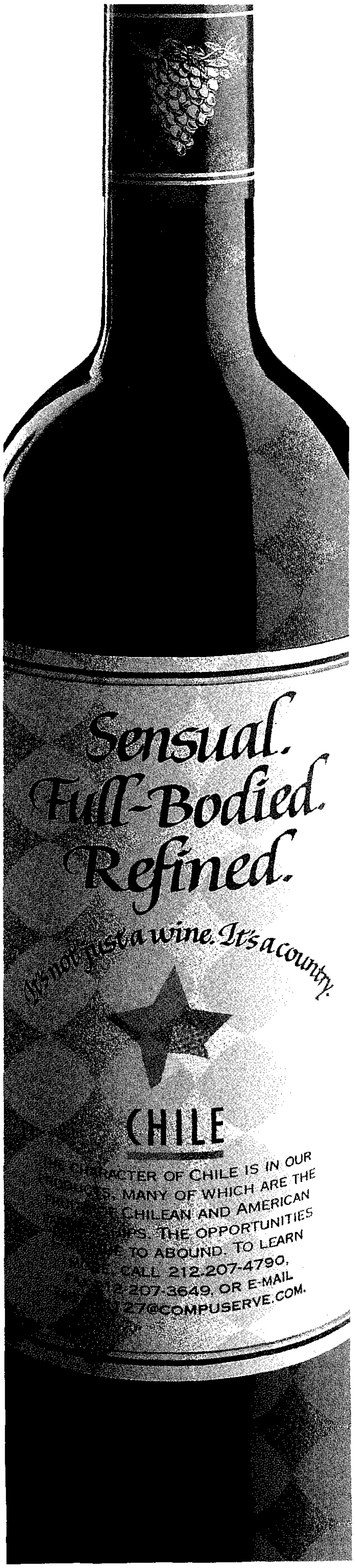


invite and frustrate straightforward reading. Through Feb. 17. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

**Henryk Tomaszewski**—A retrospective of posters by the maverick Polish graphic designer. Through March 1. (School of Visual Arts, 209 E. 23rd St. Open Mondays through Thursdays, 9 to 8; Fridays, 9 to 5.)

**"Epitaphs"**—Death on the installment plan, the art-world way: some thirty works on the themes of mourning and morbidity, which add up to a rewarding group show. Andy Warhol's "Self-Portrait with Skull" (1978) depicts a dour-looking artist with an oddly jaunty death's-head perched on his shoulder like a parrot. The most amusing piece may be John Coplans' "Letter to My Son" (1995), which begins flatly "This letter is about the disposal of my body after my death..." and continues, with hilariously detailed and persnickety instructions regarding his cremation and the scattering of his ashes, to its sardonic sign-off: "Good Luck!" Through March 2. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

**"Model Home"**—The Institute of Contemporary Art's Clocktower gallery reopens with this show, which was conceived as a living space in which visitors may coo and criticize, just like they do in other people's homes. Parts of every room, from bar to bath, are here, along with window treatments and swatches of wall, floor, and furniture coverings. Sarah Charlesworth, Robert Gober, Byron Kim, Frank Moore, Rona Pondick, Elaine Reichek, Lawrence Weiner, and Franz West are among the sixty artists involved. Through March 31. (108 Leonard St., between Broadway and Lafayette St. Open Thursdays and Fridays, 4 to 10; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 7.)

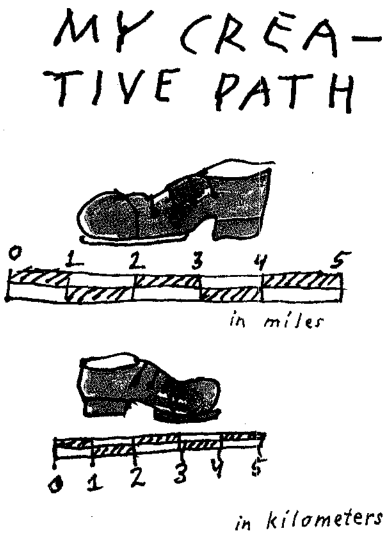
**Short List**—**rita ackermann,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **elaine anthony,** Haller, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 27. . . . **massimo antonaci,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Through March 9. . . . **danielle galliano,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through March 13. . . . **robert grosvenor,** Markey, 55 Vandam St. Through March 23. . . . **roni horn,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6; through April 14. . . . **alfred jensen** and **oliver herring,** Protetch, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 17. . . . **alex katz,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through March 16. . . . **jutta koether,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through March 10. . . . **alix stewart lambert,** Freire, 580 Broadway. Through March 2. . . . **scott lyall,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6; through March 10. . . . **eugene von bruenchenhein,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through Feb. 24.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**Lola Alvarez Bravo** (1907-93)—Two exhibitions of the pioneering Mexican modernist's work. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 6. Through Feb. 25. . . . ¶ Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through March 9.)

**Mario Giacomelli / Jacques Henri Lartigue** (1894-1986)—Giacomelli has an abiding love for the Adriatic coast and for the Old World domesticity that still thrives there. This retrospective—of rural landscapes and portraits, including an idyllic series of young seminarians at play in the snow—displays the depth of that love. / Panoramic views of upper-middle-class leisure pursuits of the twenties and thirties (motorcar racing and touring, golf), all demonstrating the artist's mercurial flair and his affection for the "art of the transient." Both shows through Feb. 24. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

**Jim Goldberg / Kiki Smith**—This San Francisco-based photographer spent seven years hanging out with runaway teen-agers in California; the result is "Raised by Wolves," a harrowing excavation of pain. The work has none of the prurient glamour of Larry Clark's pictures—these kids are suffering. From a girl's tote bag, on exhibit in a glass case, tumble forth the relics of twisted youth: a flag showing Raggedy Ann and Andy fornicating, a



*Self-portrait by Henryk Tomaszewski (School of Visual Arts).*

Teddy bear on a noose. Quotations from the subjects ("Sometimes remembering ain't no fun") are scrawled on the gallery walls. / Two dozen color photographs that document the production and installation of the artist's sculptures. Both shows through Feb. 24. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

**Erich Lessing**—In thousands of black-and-white pictures, this Austrian photojournalist (who remains underappreciated in this country) chronicled the Cold War from all angles; the pictures here include sharp views of Eisenhower (a sly airport smile), Krushchev (wielding an ax), Bulganin, and Adenauer. A quiet overhead view of de Gaulle calming the troops in Algiers brings to mind "The Day of the Jackal." This exhibit of more than a hundred works also includes Lessing's chilling photographs of the devastation wrought by the Hungarian Revolution. . . . **note:** In the anteroom are unabashedly beautiful prints made with an electron microscope by the biologist-photographer France Bourély. The subjects are tsetse flies, mustard-flower petals, and rose stamens, but the images evoke extraterrestrial landscapes and Gothic monsters. Both shows through March 6. (Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

**Toshio Shibata / Henri Cartier-Bresson**—"The Edge of Nature," a black-and-white series that presents Japanese attempts to control the landscape with a distilled irony. Soil erosion in the countryside is held at bay with all sorts of concrete buttresses; Shibata's use of both rectilinear and organic compositions gives the impression that these spaces are the unruly offspring of traditional Zen gardens. / A rewarding selection of lesser-known vintage prints by the master of the "decisive moment." Both shows through Feb. 24. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

**"1991-1996"**—An anniversary exhibition features photographs by Sally Mann, Lynn Davis, Elliott Erwitt, Bill Brandt, Ilse Bing, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Josef Breitenbach, Shikanosuke Yagaki, and others. Through March 9. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

**International Center of Photography,** 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Fazal Sheikh: A Sense of Common Ground," portraits of Sudanese, Ethiopian, Somalian, Rwandan, and Mozambican refugees. Through March 31. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

**Short List**—**tom baril** and **rocky schenck,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **peter campus,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **michael johnson,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through March 2. . . . **thomas ruff,** 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through March 9.

*(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and El Museo del Barrio.)*

# CLASSICAL MUSIC

*(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)*

## OPERA

**Metropolitan Opera**—**turandot,** with Ghena Dimitrova, Angela Gheorghiu, Lando Bartolini, and Dimitri Kavrakos; conducted by Nello Santi. (Feb. 14 at 8 and Feb. 17 at 1:30.) . . . **madama butterfly,** with Diana Soviero, Wendy White, Franco Farina, and Juan Pons; Julius Rudel. (Feb. 15 at 8.) . . . With Maria Spacagna, Yun Deng, Mr. Farina, and Thomas Allen; Mr. Rudel. (Feb. 20 at 8.) . . . **aida,** with Nina Rautio, Stefania Toczyska, Michael Sylvester, and Juan Pons; Christian Badea. (Feb. 16 and Feb. 19 at 8.) . . . **così fan tutte,** with Carol Vaness, Susanne Mentzer, Cecilia Bartoli, Jerry Hadley, Dwayne Croft, and Thomas Allen; James Levine. (Feb. 17 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

**"Three Stories of the Honorable Flower"**—A chamber opera by Maurice Ohana, which was premièred in 1978 at the Avignon Festival. (La Mama, 74a E. 4th St. 475-7710. Feb. 15-18 at 7. Through Feb. 25.)

**American Chamber Opera Company**—In staged performances of Lukas Foss's "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and Charles Wakefield Cadman's "The Garden of Mystery." (Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. Feb. 16-17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 781-0857. Through Feb. 24.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**New York Philharmonic**—Michael Tilson Thomas conducts Ives's brief fanfare "From the Steeples and the Mountains" and "Decoration Day" (from the "Holidays" Symphony), as well as Mahler's Symphony No. 5. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 15-17 at 8 and Feb. 20 at 7:30.)

**Brandenburg Ensemble**—Flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal and violinist Jennifer Koh are the soloists in a concert that includes concertos and small-scale orchestral works by Mozart, Vivaldi, Carl Stamitz, and Bach. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 14 at 8.)

**National Experimental Chinese Orchestra**—This ensemble featuring traditional Chinese instruments will present three programs, each with a different focus. Feb. 16 at 7:30: Newly composed works. . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 7:30: Concertos spotlighting such instruments as the *erh-hu* (a two-stringed bowed chordophone) and the *pai-hsiao* (panpipes). . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 2: Regional variations in Chinese music. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850.)

**Philharmonia Virtuosi**—Richard Kapp leads Haydn's Symphony No. 83, Mozart's A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 488, with Orli Shaham), and Respighi's "Gli Uccelli." (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 17 at 7. . . . **note:** At 5, Mr. Kapp presents an illustrated lecture on eighteenth-century keyboard music.)

**City Island Baroque Ensemble**—Performing concertos by Bach and Franz Anton Hoffmeister. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Feb. 18 at noon.)

**American Symphony Chamber Orchestra**—Leon Botstein conducts, and will very likely talk about, works whose histories were influenced by the politics of the Third Reich: Bernhard Sekles's Serenade for Eleven Solo Instruments, Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht," Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, and waltzes by Johann Strauss, Jr. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 18 at 7.)

**Jupiter Symphony**—To many, the mere mention of Carl Czerny summons up the memory of keyboard exercises repeated ad nauseam. (Even during his lifetime, rivals circulated rumors that Czerny hated children and had written his exercises expressly to torment them.) But Czerny's accomplishments went far beyond his pedagogical collections (some of which are still in use). A student and close friend of Beethoven's and one of the finest pianists of his day, he composed and published no fewer than eight hundred and sixty-one opuses—mostly solo-piano music, but also chamber music, concertos, and choral works. His music contains much to admire, and it sometimes bears at least a superficial resemblance to Beethoven's. (In fact, a Czerny Society is currently forming as an offshoot of the American Beethoven Society, to accommodate the many American music lovers who have fallen under his spell.) In these concerts, the duo pianists Kenneth and Jean Wentworth perform in Czerny's C-Major Concerto for Piano Four-Hands (with Jens Nygaard conducting), and Anton Kuerti (who in his piano recitals has championed Czerny's large-scale keyboard works) conducts the composer's D-Major Symphony. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Feb. 19 at 2 and 7 and Feb. 20 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

**Atlas Chamber Orchestra of Israel**—Presenting Zvi Avni's "Prayer" and Naomi Shemer's "Yerushalayim shel Zahav," as well as music by Schubert and Vivaldi (two concertos from "The Four Seasons," with violinist Sergiu Schwartz). Dalia Atlas conducts. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Feb. 19 at 8.)

## RECITALS

**Bargemusic**—Feb. 14 at 7 (cocktails at 6): A candlelit dinner concert in this romantic setting, with music by Mozart and Brahms. . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 7:30 and Feb. 18 at 4: Ronald Thomas plays Bach's Suite No. 5 for Unaccompanied Cello; violinist Carmit Zori and pianist Lisa Moore join him in trios by Mozart and Brahms (in B Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061.)

**Chamber Extravaganza**—Soprano Barbara Hendricks, violinist Pamela Frank, violist Rebecca Young, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, double bassist Edgar Meyer, and pianist Emanuel Ax collaborate in an evening of songs and chamber music, including a set of Beethoven's folk-song arrangements, a new piano quintet ("Trout Variations") by Mr. Meyer, and Schubert's "Trout" Quintet (a buoyant recording of which—with the same performers—is slated for imminent release by Sony Classical). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 14 at 8.)

**New Music Consort**—Presenting recent works by Carter, Wuorinen, Zhou Long, Kaija Saariaho, and Nils Vigeland. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Feb. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 924-0077.)

**Carol Wincenc**—Flutist, with pianist Stephen Gosling, in a recital that includes works by Bach, Dutilleux, and Paul Schoenfield, as well as the premières of pieces written for Ms. Wincenc by Christopher Rouse, Michael Torke, Tobias Picker, Henryk Górecki, Peter Schickele, and Lukas Foss. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 14 at 8.)

**Schubertiade**—The 92nd Street Y concludes the penultimate installment of its decade-long festival, which this year investigates the links between Schubert and Beethoven. Feb. 14 at 8: The Vermeer String Quartet plays Schubert's C-Minor "Quartettsatz" and A-Minor Quartet (D. 804), as well as Beethoven's Quartet in C-Sharp Minor (Op. 131), which Schubert is said to have asked to hear in his final hours. . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: Baritone Hermann Prey and pianist David Golub perform music by the two composers. . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 3: A "salon concert" of vocal and instrumental chamber music in a light vein, including vocal duets, part-songs, and four-hand keyboard variations. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

**Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center**—Feb. 15 at 6:45: Presenting the Brentano String Quartet, in music by Mendelssohn and Lutoslawski. (Rose Studio, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. For information about tickets, call 875-5788.) . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 5 and Feb. 20 at 7:30: An all-Czech program that comprises Martinů's Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola, Dvořák's A-Major String

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Sextet, and Smetana's G-Minor Piano Trio. (Alice Tully Hall.) . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 8: A concert in the society's "Music of Our Time" series spotlights composers Paul Schoenfield, David Macbride, Ursula Mamlok, and Nicholas Maw. (Merkin Concert Hall.)

**Tokyo String Quartet**—Andrew Dawes is appearing as the foursome's first violinist this season, filling in until Peter Oundjian recovers from a debilitating case of finger strain (another instance of the medical problems that are now afflicting high-profile musicians with alarming frequency). This program, however, seems crafted to downplay the group's accustomed structure by presenting not quartets but rather chamber works for two, three, and five instruments (the fifth being an additional viola, played by Pinchas Zukerman). On the bill: Schubert's String Trio in B-Flat Major (D. 471), Bartók's Duo for Violins, and quintets by Marc Neikrug and Beethoven (Op. 19). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 15 at 8.)

**Emerson String Quartet**—An hour-long talk-and-play presentation of Schubert's A-Minor Quartet (D. 804), which could serve as a follow-up "enrichment session" for listeners who have heard the piece two days earlier at the 92nd Street Y's Schubertiade. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 16 at 7.)

**Peter Serkin**—The pianist performs several works by Stefan Wolpe, Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata, and Brahms's Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 18 at 3.)

**International Hindemith Viola Festival**—Violist Kim Kashkashian anchors a four-concert series marking the centennial of the birth of Paul Hindemith, who was a distinguished violist as well as one of our century's most influential composers. This opening program comprises the Sonata for Viola and Piano (Op. 11, No. 4), Sonata for Viola Unaccompanied (Op. 11, No. 5), Duet for Viola and Cello, and String Trio No. 2. Violinist Hiroko Yajima, cellist Timothy Eddy, and pianist David Golub assist. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 18 at 3. Further concerts in the series will take place on Feb. 25, March 3, and March 10.)

**The Harp Consort**—The six-member early-music group, especially rich in the plucked-strings department, offers dances, fantasias, and ballads from seventeenth-century Italy, Spain, and South America. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Feb. 18 at 4.)

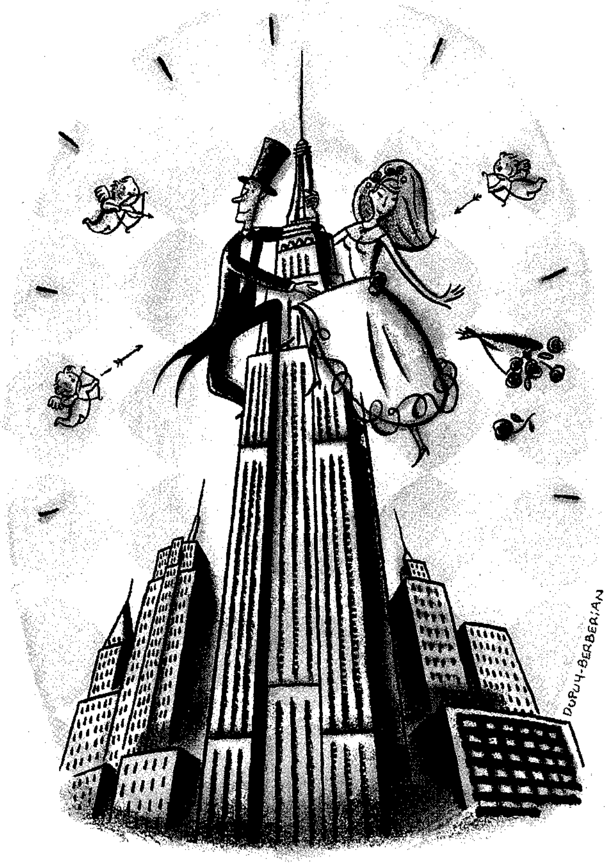
**Harry Huff**—The organist's program includes works by Bach, Titelouze, and Calvin Hampton, plus his own transcription of Wagner's "Tannhäuser" Overture. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. Feb. 18 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

**Christopher Nomura**—Baritone, with pianist Martin Katz and the Borromeo String Quartet, performing Schumann's "Liederkreis" (Op. 39), Ravel's "Histoires Naturelles," and the première of Dan Coleman's "The City and the Moon." Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 20 at 8.)

**Mendelssohn String Quartet**—Performing an all-Russian program of works by Tchaikovsky, Schnittke, Stravinsky, and Borodin. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 20 at 8.)

### ALSO OF INTEREST

**MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY:** Zdenek Macal conducts Husa's "Music for Prague, 1968" and Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Feb. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **SARAH CUNNINGHAM:** In French Baroque works for viola da gamba. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Feb. 16 at 8.) . . . **STELLE CELESTE:** An early-music ensemble, in Italian spiritual music from the seventeenth century. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Feb. 16 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC:** Conductor Robert Spano oversees a three-day exploration of Orientalism in Western music. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave., and Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St. Feb. 16-17 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 2. For program details and ticket information, call 1-718 636-4100.) . . . **ENSEMBLE FOR EARLY MUSIC:** Renaissance music for the carnival and Lenten seasons. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Feb. 17 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 3. For information about tickets, call 749-6600.) . . . **MILLENNIUM:** A Canadian chamber-music society. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689. Feb. 18 at 2.) . . . **NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY:** With pianist Alex Slobodyanik. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 18 at 3.) . . . **MUSIC AMICI:** Playing chamber music from Paris in the twenties. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Feb. 18 at 4. Admission by contribution.) . . . **SALON SOIRÉES:** Pianist Ronn Yedidia performs in his own Piano Trio, as well as in Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 1. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Feb. 18 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **JUILLIARD SYMPHONY:** Jahja Ling conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 3 and Glière's Concerto for French Horn. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 19 at 8.) . . . **SARAH CAHILL:** In twentieth-century piano music. (Bloomingdale House, 323 W. 108th St. 663-6021. Feb. 20 at 7.) . . . **SYLVIE ZAKARIAN:** Percussionist, in solo works for marimba, vibraphone, and piano. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 20 at 8.)



*Taking the plunge at the Empire State Building.*

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**Cupidity**—A sweetheart assortment of Valentine's Day activities. Feb. 14, from 10 to 7: Thirty-four couples tie the knot, one every fifteen minutes, at the Empire State Building. To qualify, couples must submit a one-page essay, "Why We Want to Get Married at the Empire State Building"; the winners will be chosen at random from the entrants. For information, call 736-3100, ext. 337. . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 7: Mark Bibbins, Honor Moore, Beatrix Gates, and David Trinidad, among others, read erotic poetry from two collections, the lesbian "Zenith of Desire" and the gay "Eros in Boystown." (A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 8: At the Valentine's Day Sex Movie Massacre, filmmaker M. M. Serra presents nine explicit films, including Peggy Ahwesh's "Trick Film" and Carolee Schneemann's "Vesper's Stampede to My Holy Mouth." (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 9th St. 477-5829.)

**Ring Around the Rodent**—According to the Chinese zodiac, the Year of the Rat falls once every twelve years, and those turning twenty-four, thirty-six, one hundred and twenty, and so on, in the next twelvemonth, are traditionally accorded such ratlike qualities as resourcefulness, industry, and charm. On Saturday, the China Institute throws a block party to celebrate the Lunar New Year and the latest batch of charming rats. The highlight of the festivities is at 1, when the lion team—drummers, gong wielders, clashers of cymbals, and a two-man lion with a six-foot tail—dances, to exterminate, as it were, the evil spirits. (125 E. 65th St. Feb. 17 at 1. For more information, call 744-8181, ext. 143.)

**Readings**—Feb. 15 at 8: Richard Howard introduces the Irish poet Eavan Boland, who will read from "An Origin Like Water." (Deutsches Haus, Columbia University, 420 W. 116th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 1: Brooklyn poets Tyren Allen, Nigel Barton, Marcrooseler Sylla, Jah'ni, Djahma Sentwali, and Yolanda Tribble read from their work, in a tribute to the late Audre Lorde. (Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. No charge beyond museum admission.)

**Talks**—Feb. 15 at 7:30: Captain James Lovell, the commander of the Apollo 13 spacecraft, talks about his star-crossed lunar mission. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. 769-5606.) . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: Camille Paglia, who now calls herself an "academic Joan Rivers" (and who could argue?), takes on comedy in American culture. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 11 A.M.: Terence Blanchard, who created the score for "Mo' Better Blues," "Malcolm X," and other Spike Lee joints, talks about making music for films. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100.) . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 4: Poet Sam Hamill considers amatory poetry from various eras and numerous angles, in a workshop whose readings include selections from "The Erotic Spirit," the anthology that Hamill edited. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. For reservations, call 431-7920.)

**Walks**—Feb. 18 at 11: Adventure on a Shoestring visits haunts of Greenwich Village ghosts, such as the stables on West 3rd Street where Aaron Burr still searches for a drowned child, and the Bedford Street speakeasy where a spectral tavernkeep continues to count the day's receipts. For more information, call 265-2663.

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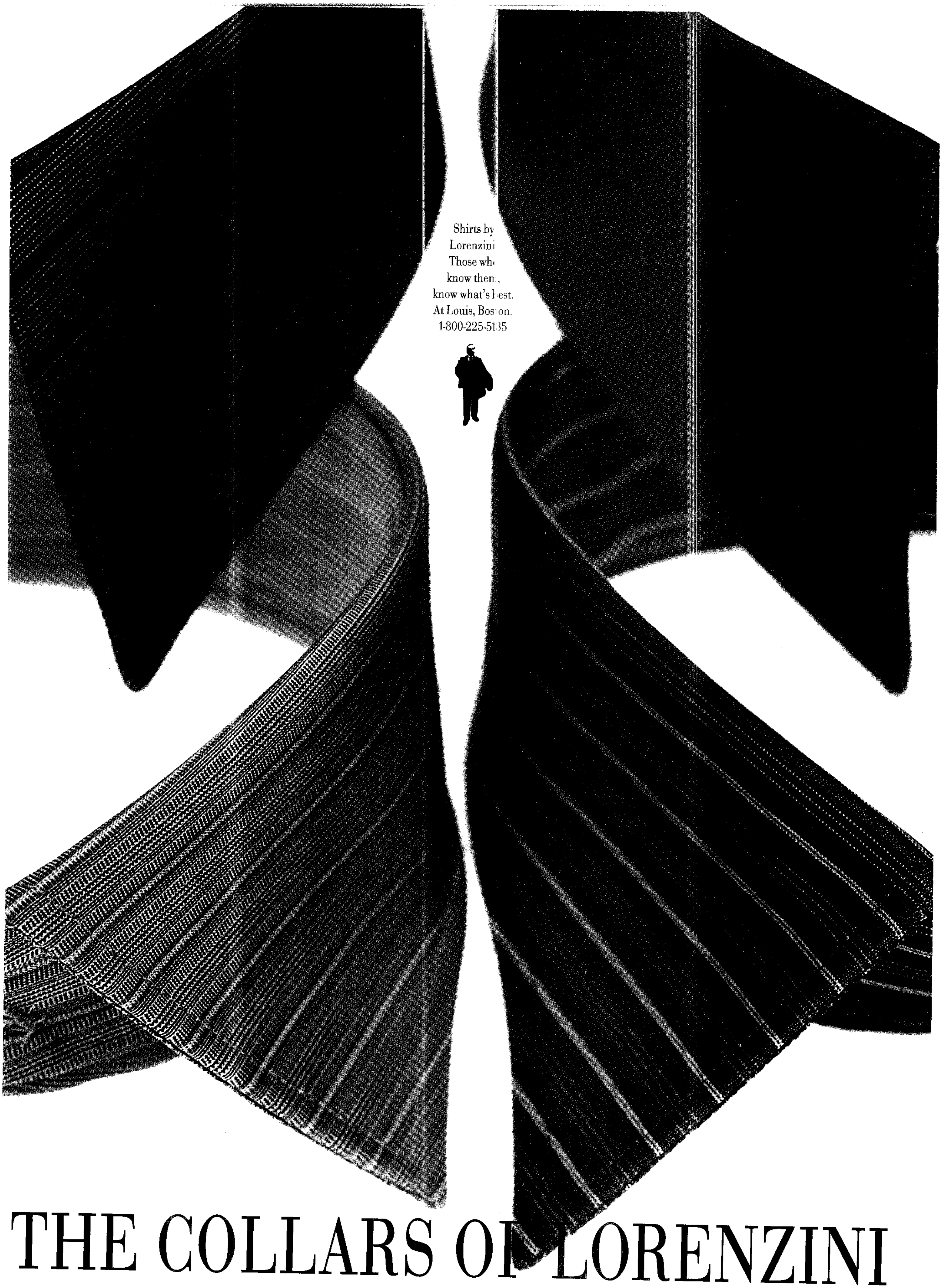
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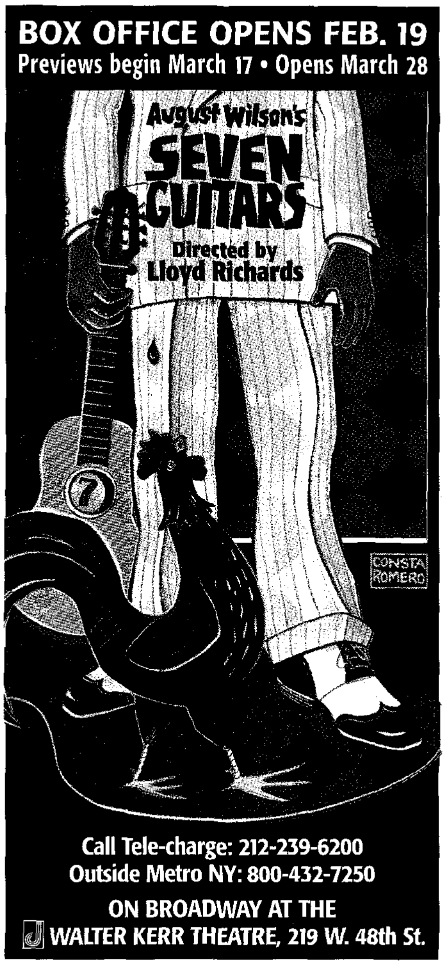
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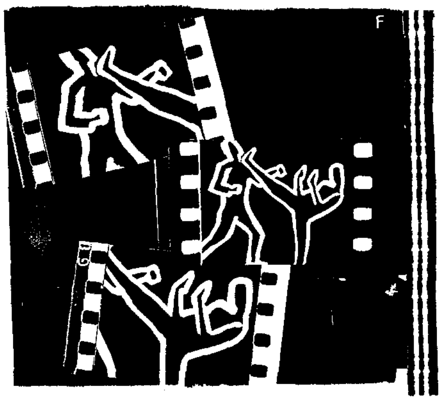

# THE MOVIES

## FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

**City Hall**—Al Pacino plays the Mayor of New York City, in a drama directed by Harold Becker. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening February 16. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

**Happy Gilmore**—A comedy written by Adam Sandler and Tim Herlihy, in which Sandler stars as a hockey player turned golf pro. Directed by Dennis Dugan. Opening February 16. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin.)

**Headless Body in Topless Bar**—A homicidal robber (Raymond J. Barry) holds the patrons of a Manhattan strip joint hostage, in a drama written by Peter Koper and directed by James Bruce. Opening February 16. (Quad Cinema.)

**Mr. Wrong**—Ellen DeGeneres stars as a talk-show talent coordinator in search of a husband. With Bill Pullman and Joan Cusack. Directed by Nick Castle. Written by Chris Matheson, Kerry Ehrin, and Craig Munson. Opening February 16. (Embassy 2.)

**Muppet Treasure Island**—Tim Curry and Kevin Bishop join Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and the Great Gonzo in a new take on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic. Directed by Brian Henson. Written by Jerry Juhl, Kirk R. Thatcher, and James V. Hart. Opening February 16. (Guild.)

**Sonic Outlaws**—A documentary by Craig Baldwin, about the 1991 battle over trademark and copyright infringement between the San Francisco audio artists Negativland and Island Records, the company that represented the Irish rockers U2. Shown with "Abductees," Paul Vester's animated short about alien abductions. Opening February 14. (Film Forum.)

## CURRENT FILMS

*(The signed notes are by Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 28.)*

**Angels & Insects**—This film, based on an A. S. Byatt neo-Victorian novella, is flatly directed by Philip Haas, but at least the performances are handsomely framed. Patsy Kensit plays an aristocrat who lives on her looks, Kristin Scott Thomas a poor relation; they share an interest in the same man, a naturalist played by Mark Rylance. Acting-wise, it's no contest: Scott Thomas turns in a beautiful portrait of poise, yearning, and sublimation.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Village East Cinemas, Tower East, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**Antonia's Line**—A Dutch feminist fairy tale about an eccentric single mother (the impressive Willeke van Ammelrooy) who sets up housekeeping on a farm after the Second World War and takes all kinds of strays—from a retarded rape victim to a depressive, Schopenhauer-saturated intellectual—under her wing. The movie could be a crowd pleaser at art houses, but what it's packaging is little more than self-regard: Antonia and her clan are righteous, and anyone who gets in their way is a pig. Written and directed by Marleen Gorris. In Dutch.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

**Beautiful Girls**—Ted Demme's comedy, about the residents of a small town in Massachusetts, features an ensemble cast that includes Matt Dillon, Timothy Hutton, Rosie O'Donnell, Martha Plimpton, Michael Rapaport, Mira Sorvino, and Uma Thurman. Written by Scott Rosenberg. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

**Bed of Roses**—A sweet romantic comedy about two lonely New Yorkers: Lisa (Mary Stuart Masterson), a workaholic executive who grew up in a loveless foster home, and Lewis (Christian Slater), a philosophical flower-delivery man. She has to learn how to open up; he must learn to curb his neediness. The leads are both fine, and, though the movie isn't great, as an alternative to the suicidal glamour of "Leaving Las Vegas" its mood of guarded optimism is more than welcome. Written and directed by Michael Goldenberg.—S.K. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

**Black Sheep**—Chris Farley stars as the ne'er-do-well brother of a politician (Tim Matheson), in a comedy written by Fred Wolf and directed by Penelope Spheeris. (34th Street Showplace, Gemini, East 85th Street, Waverly, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

**Broken Arrow**—John Travolta and Christian Slater star in John Woo's thriller as fighter pilots who lock horns over an extortion plot involving a stolen nuclear weapon. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

**Dead Man Walking**—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit.—T.R. (1/8/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

**French Twist**—A sunlit French farce written and directed by Josiane Balasko, who also enjoys herself no end in the role of Marijo, a chunky, cheerful lesbian who wanders into the marriage of Loli (Victoria Abril) and Laurent (Alain Chabat) and churns it into a froth. Abril's trademark laugh pretty well sums up the picture's gusto, but the fun doesn't last: the story settles down, the characters call an uneasy truce, and Balasko even starts to moralize on the folly of love gone wrong. In French.—A.L. (1/15/96) (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**From Dusk till Dawn**—In this picture, the sensibilities of the screenwriter, Quentin Tarantino, and the director, Robert Rodriguez ("El Mariachi," "Desperado"), don't so much mesh as simply take turns: the first half feels like Tarantino's movie, the second half like Rodriguez's. The film begins as a rather self-conscious modern Western in which bad guys (George Clooney and Tarantino) streak toward Mexico; as in "Reservoir Dogs" and "Pulp Fiction," the crooks have a tendency to babble inanely while threatening defenseless people with grievous bodily harm. For once, though, the logorrheic apprehension that Tarantino likes to build up actually has some sort of payoff: south of the border, the gunmen and their hostages are beset by hordes of vampires, and Rodriguez's berserk action style—weird weaponry, non-stop stunts, and samurai-speed editing—takes over. The movie's horror-comics second half is cheesy, derivative, and ultimately a little wearying. But it's also unpretentious and insanely cheerful. With Harvey Keitel, Juliette Lewis, Ernest Liu, Cheech Marin, Tom Savini, and Fred Williamson.—T.R. (2/5/96) (Angelika Film Center, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; through Feb. 15.)

**Hate (La Haine)**—This black-and-white French film, directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, is meant to be an urgent fax from the front lines of urban unrest—a political flyer spat out in cinéma vérité. Covering twenty-four hours in a multiracial housing project on the outskirts of Paris rocked by rioting and looting, it tracks an Arab (Said Taghmaoui), a Jew (Vincent Cassel), and a black (Hubert Kounde) as they argue, scrounge, and scuffle with the police. Their quarrelling is lively (when the language gets too rude, one of them says, "Talk nice, we're in France"), and Kassovitz's camera seems equipped with racing wheels during the action sequences. But the picture's ache for raw sociological impact is overwhelmed by its all-pervasive rap-video movieness. Kassovitz directs like an honorary soul brother of Spike Lee, the Hughes brothers, John Singleton, and Matty Rich (smart-alecks are already calling this film "Do la Right Thing"), pausing for static vignettes that look like Jim Jarmusch postcards from Nowheresville. When the film temporarily abandons the projects for picaresque adventure in Paris, it starts to imitate middle-period Bertrand Blier in its barking absurdism, with a garnish of Godardian graffiti. Sincere and intense, "Hate" ends up scrambling its own signal. It's a message movie with too many other people's messages. In French.—J.W. (Village Theatre VII.)

**Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam**—A documentary by Nick Broomfield, about the woman who ran a prostitution ring in Los Angeles. (Quad Cinema.)

**The Juror**—The indomitable Demi Moore plays the title role, but the real action belongs to Alec Baldwin, who autographs every scene he's in with a funny, scary, suave rendition of deranged narcissism. He co-stars as the Teacher, a hood hired by a mob boss (Tony Lo Bianco) to tamper with a jury in a double-homicide case. Not your average goodfella, Baldwin's Teacher is a Zen-aesthete, Nietzschean-superman sociopath; obsessed with the juror he targets, Moore's Annie Liard, he wishes to transform himself into "sheer love." Before that can happen, a lot of bystanders get hurt. Among those imperilled is Annie's best friend, a doctor who parties as hard as she works, portrayed with feathery, lyrical abandon by Anne Heche. Directed by Brian Gibson ("What's Love Got to Do with It") and set in upstate New York, the film noses around domestic nooks that look like decorated caves and creates an atmosphere of secrecy and subterfuge. The spell is broken when the scene shifts to Guatemala, land of colorful masks and ruined temples, where the script seems to suffer a nervous breakdown. Indefensible as cinema, inexplicable as psychology, "The Juror" is worth catching only as Baldwin's charisma-workout video. He's like Jerry Lewis's Buddy Love from "The Nutty Professor" resurrected as the angel of death.—J.W. (2/12/96) (Village Theatre VII, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Beekman; through Feb. 15.)

**Leaving Las Vegas**—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kindhearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

**A Midwinter's Tale**—Modest to a fault. After the flailing overreach (and critical failure) of his Frankenstein film, Kenneth Branagh beats a tactical retreat and returns to his theatrical roots, as writer and director of this affectionate farce about a sad-sack ensemble fumbling to stage "Hamlet" in a provincial village. The production's flustered star and director (i.e., Branagh's alter ego) is played by Michael Maloney, whose features suggest Ralph Fiennes filled with the spirit of the Holy Ghost. The cast is game—Richard Briers is admirably gruff, Julia Sawalha seems self-propelled—and its slapstick produces some laughs, but the film is too frantic in seeking our approval. Branagh seems to be running a pet shop for actors in dire need of adoption. He provides enough tearful reconciliations at the end of the film to make one ill. The only cool cucumber on the screen is Joan Collins, wielding a cellular phone as the actor-director's agent.—J.W. (2/12/96) (Village East Cinema and Lincoln Square.)

**Mr. Holland's Opus**—A film for the entire family, if you have no place else to leave them. Richard Dreyfuss speaks gruffly and carries a little baton as Glenn Holland, a musician who aspires to be a serious composer but finds his true calling as a high-school teacher. Dreyfuss builds up a head

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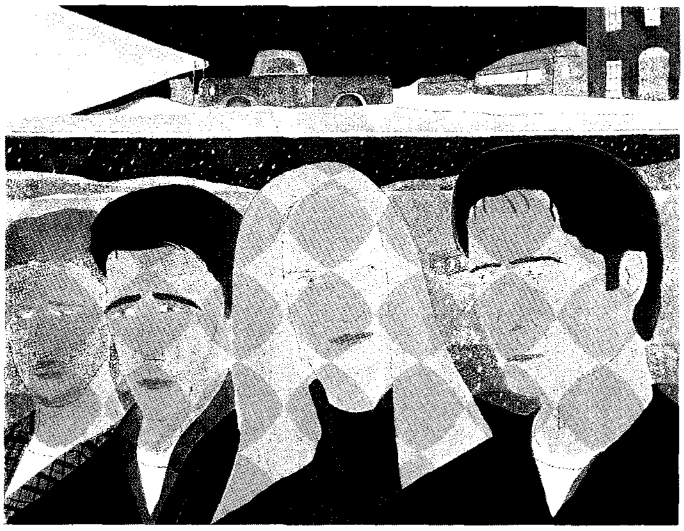
of steam and ages persuasively, but the movie is shameless in its efforts to extract tears from the audience. Glenne Headly co-stars as Holland's chipmunk wife.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

**Once Upon a Time . . . When We Were Colored**—Tim Reid's adaptation of the 1989 book by Clifton Taulbert, about growing up in Mississippi in the forties and fifties, stars Al Freeman, Jr., Phylicia Rashad, and Leon. Written by Paul W. Cooper. (Manhattan Twin.)



*Michael Rapaport, Matt Dillon, Uma Thurman, and Timothy Hutton in "Beautiful Girls."*

GEOFFREY PARKER

**Restoration**—Michael Hoffman's film starts in the year 1660 and follows a young doctor named Merivel (Robert Downey, Jr.) through his epicurean excesses at the court of Charles II, his purgative sojourn among the Quakers, his selfless struggle against the plague, and his own restoration to royal favor. The sets and costumes are a dream, but the performers—Sam Neill as the ineffectual king, Meg Ryan as an Irish madwoman, and Hugh Grant as a foppish painter—are given no room to breathe; only David Thewlis, playing Merivel's Quaker colleague, delivers any real pathos. Adapted by Rupert Walters from Rose Tremain's novel.—A.L. (68th St. Playhouse, Waverly, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

**Richard III**—This fancy production—directed by Richard Loncraine, from a stage version by Richard Eyre—transports the scheming nobles of fifteenth-century England to the nineteen-thirties and dresses the villainous protagonist (Ian McKellen) in a Fascist's black shirt. The obtrusive ingenuity of the theatrical concept gives the whole spectacle a preening, self-infatuated quality. The play is basically a rip-roaring melodrama with a magnetic, appallingly vital bad guy; what Loncraine and McKellen give us—a thin conceit about a dull, efficient, affectless sort of monster—is a poor substitute.—T.R. (1/22/96) (Village East Cinemas, Baronet, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

**Sense and Sensibility**—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow-actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

**12 Monkeys**—Terry Gilliam's elaborate time-travel thriller is based on Chris Marker's elegant twenty-nine-minute short, "La Jetée" (1964). Turning that perfect, rigorously constructed fable about memory and mortality into a big-budget futuristic action picture is an inherently quixotic project, but the screenwriters, David and Janet Peoples, do a surprisingly skillful job. Unfortunately, instead of respecting the reflective nature of the material, Gilliam bombards us with bizarre sensation. Bruce Willis and Madeleine Stowe give alert, thoughtful performances; Brad Pitt, in a showy role as a voluble lunatic, is dreadful.—T.R. (1/22/96) (34th St. East, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Ziegfeld; through Feb. 15.)

**The White Balloon**—Jafar Panahi's drama follows the adventures of a seven-year-old girl (Aida Mohammadkhani) at the market in Tehran. In Persian. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**White Squall**—The dramatic and visual centerpiece—a big, loud, scary storm at sea—is a tour de force of high-adventure moviemaking. The director, Ridley Scott, a wizard with a wind machine, conveys the pure, eruptive force of elemental chaos with extraordinary immediacy. Unfortunately, this grand-scale action scene, like the squall itself, seems to come out of nowhere: a freak occurrence that hits, without warning, near the end of a long, tedious, and largely uneventful voyage. The screenplay, by Todd Robinson, is based on the story of a real-life shipwreck in 1961, but, since the vessel also serves as a kind of prep school, the movie plays like standard coming-of-age fiction—"Dead Poets Society" on a boat. Until the storm strikes, you're afraid that the title refers not to a meteorological event but to the deafening sounds of middle-class teenagers complaining about bad dads. With Jeff Bridges, Caroline Goodall, and Scott Wolf.—T.R. (2/5/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; through Feb. 15.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME:** Lincoln Square. . . . **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** (reviewed in our issue of 11/20/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **BABE** (9/4/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BALTO:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY** (6/19/95): Village East Cinemas, Gemini, Oprheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square. . . . **CASINO** (12/4/95): National Twin. . . . **THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **EYE FOR AN EYE:** Orpheum VII and Criterion Center. . . . **FRANKIE STARLIGHT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **GEORGIA** (12/11/95): Village East Cinemas. . . . **GET SHORTY** (10/23/95): 62nd & Broadway. . . . **HEAT** (12/25/95-1/1/96): Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center. . . . **JADE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **JUMANJI** (12/25/95-1/1/96): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **LAMERICA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LAST SUMMER IN THE HAMPTONS:** Cinema Village and Angelika 57. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **NICO ICON:** Film Forum. . . . **NIXON:** Sutton. . . . **NUEBA YOL:** Embassy 4. . . . **OTHELLO** (12/18/95): Paris. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Quad Cinema and Cinema 3. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Village East Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **SABRINA** (12/25/95-1/1/96): New York Twin and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **SCREAMERS:** Village East Cinemas and National Twin. . . . **SEVEN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SHANGHAI TRIAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SHOPPING:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THINGS TO DO IN DENVER WHEN YOU'RE DEAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square. . . . **TO DIE FOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TOY STORY:** 23rd St. West Triplex, Guild, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 3. . . .**THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WAITING TO EXHALE** (1/15/96): 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and Criterion Center. . . . **WHEN NIGHT IS FALLING:** Worldwide Cinemas.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

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*(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)*

### EAST SIDE

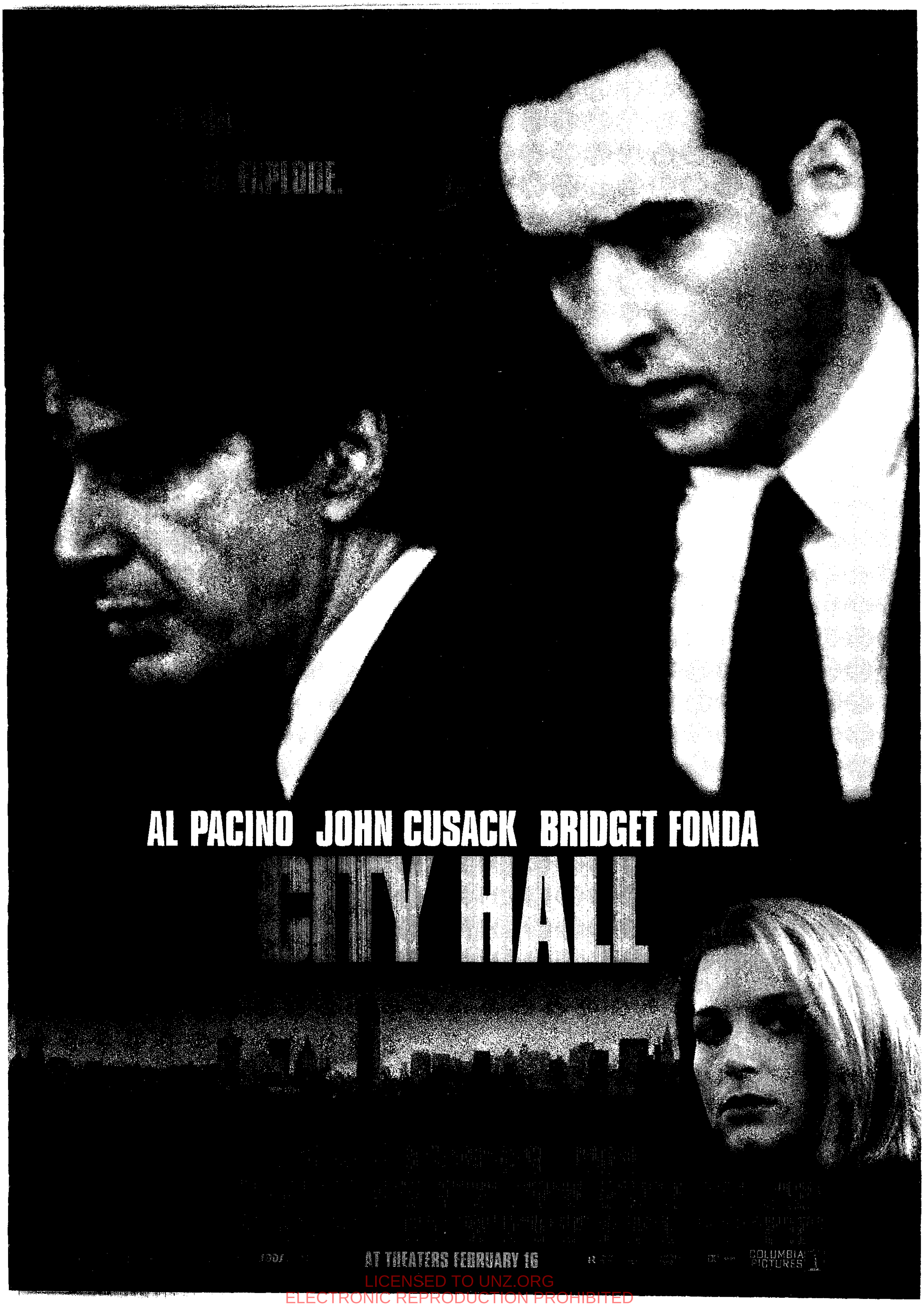
**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th St.
**34th Street Showplace,** 238 E. 34th St.
**34th St. East,** 241 E. 34th St.
**Eastside Playhouse,** Third Ave. at 55th St.
**Sutton I and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**Gotham Cinema,** Third Ave. at 58th St.
**Manhattan Twin,** Third Ave. at 59th St.
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**Baronet and Coronet,** Third Ave. at 59th St.
**Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**Gemini I and 2,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 67th St.
**68th St. Playhouse,** Third Ave. at 68th St.
**Tower East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**East 85th Street,** First Ave. at 85th St.
**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**86th Street East Twin,** Third Ave. at 86th St.

### WEST SIDE

**Film Forum,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
**Waverly I and 2,** Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
**Art Greenwich Twin,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**23rd St. West Triplex,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Guild,** 33 W. 50th St.
**Worldwide Cinemas,** 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.
**Carnegie Hall Cinemas,** Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
**Angelika 57,** 225 W. 57th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St.
**Cinema 3,** 2 W. 59th St.
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
**Regency,** Broadway at 67th St.
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**Metro Cinema I and 2,** Broadway at 99th St.
**Olympia I and II,** Broadway at 107th St.

### TIMES SQUARE AREA

**Criterion Center,** Broadway at 44th St.
**Embassy I,** Broadway at 46th St.
**Embassy 2, 3, and 4,** Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**National Twin,** Broadway at 44th St.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## REVIVALS

*(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)*

**Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore** (1975)—Ellen Burstyn stars in this Martin Scorsese comedy, from an original script by Robert Getchell, about a thirty-five-year-old widow who sets out with her young son to make a new life. Full of funny malice and breakneck vitality, it's absorbing and intelligent even when the issues it raises get all fouled up. With Harvey Keitel, Kris Kristofferson, Valerie Curtin, Lelia Goldoni, Lane Bradbury, Diane Ladd, Jodie Foster, and as the son, wire-drawn little Alfred Lutter, who has crack comedy timing.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Feb. 17.)

**Calcutta** (1969)—In the late nineteen-sixties, Louis Malle, fed up, he said, with "actors, studios, fiction, and Paris," took off for India for a period of "total improvising." Working with a minimal crew (a cameraman and a soundman), he shot the footage out of which he made the ninety-two-minute "Calcutta" and the seven-part "Phantom India"—masterful personal documentaries. Malle himself narrates in English, and his soft, cultivated voice and observations are integral to this film, which fuses squalor, death, and beauty. It's an incomparable vision of the poetic insanity of India.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 19-20.)

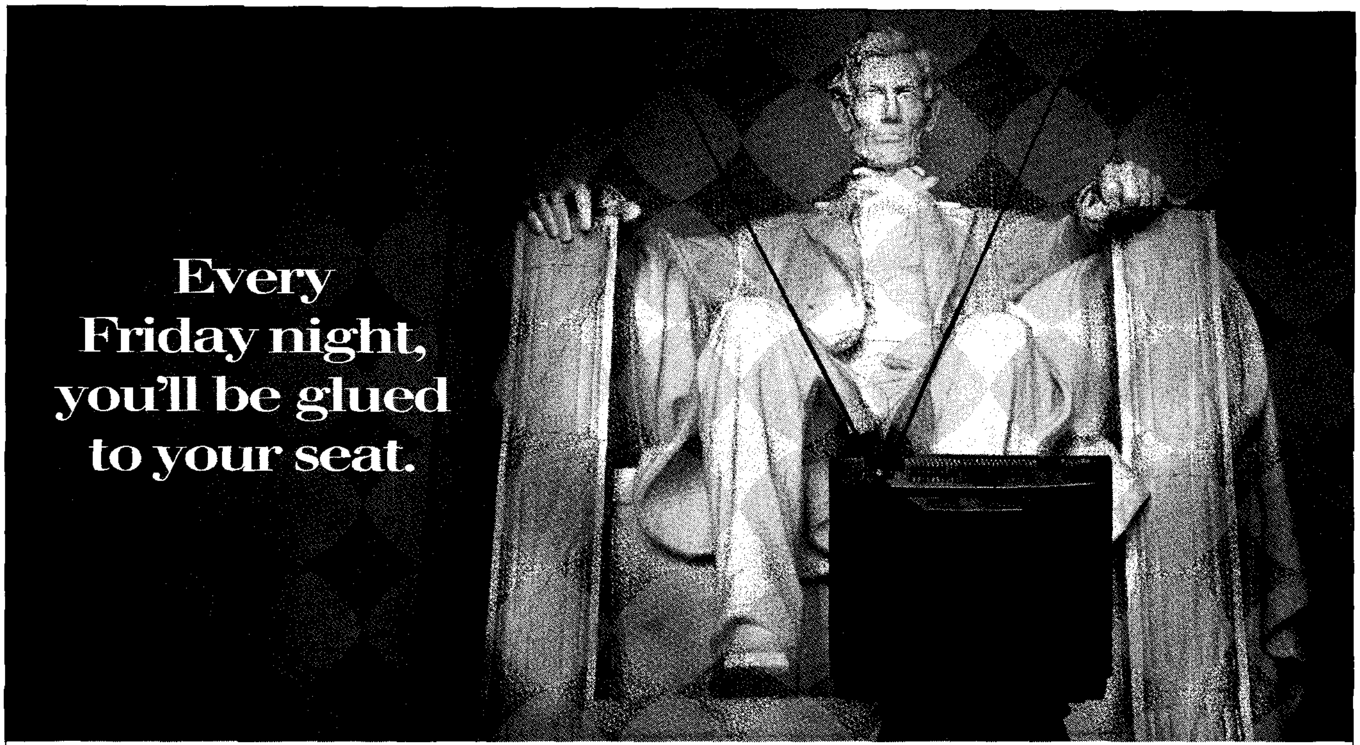
**Un Chien Andalou** (1928)—Even without the famous shock image of the sliced eye, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali's short silent film has the hallucinatory and incendiary effect they sought. Some of the images have great poetic force, and at times they have an erotic humor that one has difficulty explaining, even to oneself. With Pierre Batcheff as the cyclist, Dali as the priest, and Buñuel as the man with the razor.—P.K. (Symphony Space; Feb. 20.)

**The Private Life of Don Juan** (1934)—A relatively motionless Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., in a rueful, satirical movie analogy to his then domestic problems. His Don Juan, past his heyday, is in his forties and has to watch his diet and sneak in a masseur. The story is about how he frees himself from the demands of philandering. It's one of those films that lumbers along and never really takes off, though the gimmick—he is believed dead and comes back in disguise—appears promising. With Merle Oberon, Benita Hume, Binnie Barnes, Melville Cooper, Joan Gardner, and Athene Seyler. Directed by Alexander Korda, from a script by Lajos Biro and Frederick Lonsdale, based on a play by Henri Bataille. The picture features sumptuous Spanish costumes; some look cribbed from Goya.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; through Feb. 15.)

**Rocco and His Brothers** (1961)—Luchino Visconti's strange sprawling epic—a flamboyant melodrama about how a poor Sicilian family (a mother and her five sons) is corrupted and eventually destroyed by life in Milan. Visconti's methods are still partly neorealist, but the scale of the film is huge and operatic, and it loses the intimacy of the best neorealist films, and their breath of life. This is more like a hollow, spectacular version of a Warners movie of the thirties (three of the sons take turns in the prizefight ring), but the characters aren't as vivid and individualized as the Warners actors made them. The movie is memorable largely because of Annie Girardot's stunning performance as a prostitute; her role suggests that of Dostoyevski's great heroine in "The Idiot," while her final scene suggests "Woyzeck." The weirdest aspect of the film is the casting of Alain Delon (who at times seems to be lighted as if he were Hedy Lamarr) as a saintly, simple Prince Myshkin. Renato Salvatori plays the most forceful of the brothers—it's actually his sexual passion rather than the horrors of urban existence that destroys the family. Also with Katina Paxinou as the mother, and Roger Hanin, Paolo Stoppa, Suzy Delair, and Claudia Cardinale. The script is adapted from the novel "The Bridge of Ghisolfa," by Giovanni Testori; there are also suggestions of the Biblical story of Joseph and his brethren. Cinematography by Giuseppe Rotunno; music by Nino Rota. In Italian.—P.K. (Symphony Space; Feb. 20.)

**Le Samouraï** (1967)—In Jean-Pierre Melville's coolest, sleekest, and most influential salute to the hardworking professionals of the French underworld, Alain Delon plays a hit man who dodges the minions of a double-crossing employer, as well as the police, after murdering a night-club boss. Until the final melancholy twist, Melville uses Delon's daggerlike pretty-boy looks for ambiguity—with a serrated edge. Although the anti-hero has a faithful moll (Nathalie Delon) and a thing for the night club's alluring pianist (Cathy Rosier), his attachments are all business, and the writer-director doesn't try to humanize him. He doesn't have to: he banks on our empathizing with Delon's loner as he outsteps an organization man par excellence, the inspector on his case (François Périer). The filmmaker's precision craftsmanship, compelling throughout, triumphs in a chase through the Métro. Cinematography by Henri Decaë. Based on the novel "The Ronin," by Joan McLeod. Released here in 1972 as "The Godson." In French.—M.S. (Florence Gould Hall; Feb. 20.)

**Who's That Knocking at My Door?** (1969)—Martin Scorsese's début feature has just the slightest bit of story line, but the movie is a fascinating portfolio piece: a black-and-white blueprint for "Mean Streets." Harvey Keitel plays one of Scorsese's Little Italy guys, a between-jobs bank teller who spends time going to the movies or carousing and roughhousing with fellow-idlers. When he strikes up a conversation with a pretty, educated



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woman (Zina Bethune) who's looking at *Paris Match*, it's as if he were contacting someone from another universe. Later, his Madonna-whore complex prevents him from connecting with her sexually or handling a secret from her past. Scorsese defines the character's conflicts too blatantly—he shoves religious statuary in your face—yet the film is loaded with talent (Michael Wadleigh co-shot it, Thelma Schoonmaker edited), and the boys'-night-out sequences are peerless. The movie allows you to gauge the arc of Scorsese's career: mining Italian-American material here, refining it in "Mean Streets," and strip-mining it in "GoodFellas."—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Feb. 17.)

**ZAZIE DANS LE MÉTRO** (1960)—Movies are said to be an international language, but sometimes a film that is popular in one country finds only a small audience in another. This anarchistic, impudent comedy (from Raymond Queneau's novel), a great success in France in 1960, was hardly heard of in the United States. The film, which is like a Mack Sennett two-reeler running wild, seemed to be peculiarly disturbing for American critics and audiences alike. To Americans, "Zazie" seemed to go too far—to be almost demonic in its inventiveness, like a joke that gets so complicated you can't time your laughs comfortably. The editing, which is very fast, may be too clever; some critics have suggested that for Americans this comedy sets off some kind of freakish, fantastic anxiety. Putting it as squarely as possible, Bosley Crowther wrote in the *New York Times*: "There is something not quite innocent or healthy about this film." Yet it's like "Alice in Wonderland": Zazie (Catherine Demongeot) is a foulmouthed little cynic, age eleven, who comes to Paris for a weekend with her uncle (Philippe Noiret), a female impersonator, and nobody and nothing are quite what they seem. Louis Malle, who directed, includes satirical allusions to "La Dolce Vita" and other films, and a parody of his own "The Lovers." Many of the modern styles in film editing, which were generally thought to derive from Alain Resnais or Richard Lester, have an earlier source in "Zazie." In French.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 16 and Feb. 19.)

*Opening February 16, John Cusack and Al Pacino in "City Hall."*

TIM BOWER

## LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)*

**FILM FORUM 2,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Feb. 15: "Don Q, Son of Zorro" (1925, Donald Crisp; silent), with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and "The Private Life of Don Juan" (†). . . . ¶ From Feb. 16: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Cybill Shepherd, and Jodie Foster.

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART,** Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Films by Louis Malle. Feb. 15 at 2:30: "Elevator to the Gallows" (1967; in French). . . . Feb. 16 at 2:30 and Feb. 20 at 5: "Atlantic City" (1981), with Burt Lancaster, Susan Sarandon, Kate Reid, Hollis McLaren, Robert Joy, and Michel Piccoli. . . . Feb. 16 at 6 and Feb. 19 at 2: "Zazie dans le Métro" (†). . . . Feb. 19 at 5 and Feb. 20 at 2:30: "Calcutta" (†). . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 3 and 6: "Evald's Acre" (1994, Kerati Uibo) and "Diva in the Bath" (1993, Uibo). . . . ¶ Feb. 16-20: Silent films starring Asta Nielsen. With non-English intertitles and live English voice-overs. . . . ¶ Feb. 17-18: Films by and about animator Friz Freleng.

**WALTER READE THEATRE,** Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Polish cinema, from 1930 to the present; all films in Polish, with English subtitles. Feb. 14 at 2 and 8:15: "Man of Marble" (1977, Andrzej Wajda). . . . Feb. 14 at 6 and Feb. 15 at 2: "The Maids of Wilko" (1979, Wajda). . . . Feb. 16 at 2 and Feb. 17 at 7:30: "Pharoah" (1966, Jerzy Kawalerowicz). . . . Feb. 16 at 6 and 9:20 and Feb. 17 at 5:45: "Family Life" (1971, Krzysztof Zanussi). . . . Feb. 16 at 7:45 and Feb. 17 at 4: "The Life of Matthew" (1968, Witold Leszczynski). . . . Feb. 18 at 4 and 7:30: "The Saragossa Manuscript" (1964, Wojciech Has). . . . Feb. 19 at 2 and 6:15: "A Pearl in the Crown" (1972, Kazimierz Kutz). . . . Feb. 19 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Kill That Love" (1972, Janusz Morgenstern). . . . Feb. 20 at 2: "Without Anesthesia" (1979, Wajda). . . . Feb. 20 at 7: "Nights and Days" (1975, Jerzy Antczak). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Feb. 17-18 at 2: "Stanley and Livingston" (1939, Henry King), with Spencer Tracy.

**A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE,** 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Feb. 18 at 7, the feature will be "Mahogany" (1975, Berry Gordy), with Diana Ross, Billy Dee Williams, and Anthony Perkins.

**SYMPHONY SPACE,** Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Feb. 20 at 7: "Un Chien Andalou" (†). . . . Feb. 20 at 7:45: "Rocco and His Brothers" (†).

**FLORENCE GOULD HALL,** 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Feb. 20 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Le Samouraï" (†).

**MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO,** 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—James Dean's television appearances. Through March 10: "The Evil Within" (1953), "The Unlighted Road" (1955), and a highway-safety ad filmed in 1955. . . . ¶ Television work by John Frankenheimer. Through Feb. 18: "Portrait in Celluloid" (1955), with Jack Carson, Kim Hunter, and Don Taylor, and "The Comedian" (1957), with Mickey Rooney. . . . From Feb. 20: "The Last Tycoon" (1957), with Jack Palance, and "The Thundering Wave" (1957), with James Mason.

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE,** 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films by Martin Scorsese. Feb. 17 at 2: "Who's That Knocking at My Door?" (†). . . . Feb. 17 at 4: "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" (†). . . . Feb. 18 at 2: "Mean Streets" (1973), with Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel. . . . Feb. 18 at 4:30: "GoodFellas" (1990), with De Niro and Ray Liotta.

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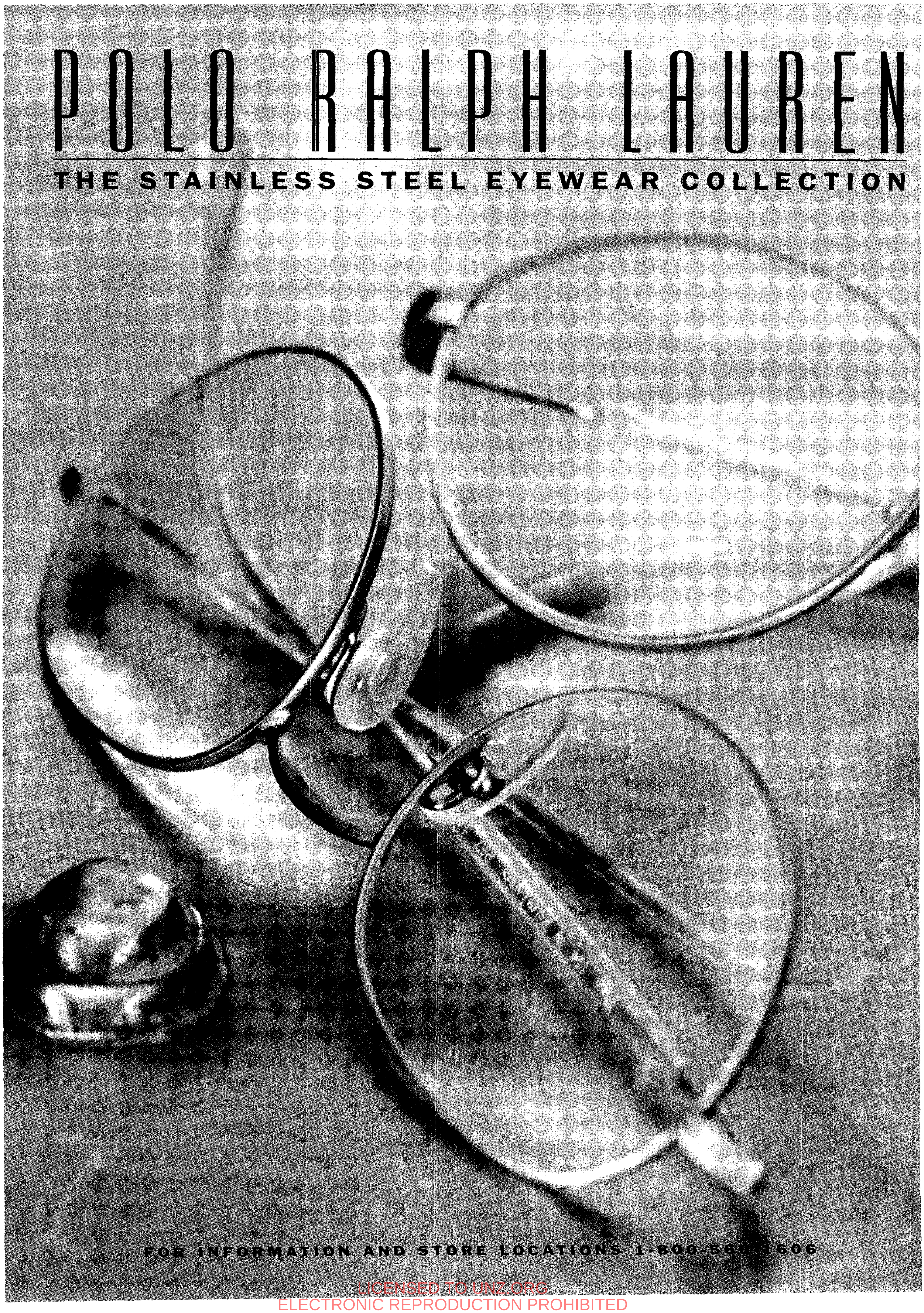
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THE NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## BONES OF CONTENTION

NEWS that one of the more spectacular dénouements to our troubled century was not going to come to pass leaked out a few days ago in Washington, when Metropolitan Kyril of the Russian Orthodox Church came through town. The church's Sunday of Forgiveness falls on February 25th this year, and it had been announced that a state funeral for Tsar Nicholas II and his family would take place then. The remains of the Romanovs were exhumed from a shallow grave near Ekaterinburg in 1991, and the debate about their identity seemed to have been permanently settled last fall, when the results of a DNA test carried out at an American military laboratory in Rockville, Maryland, paralleled those of an eminent British DNA lab. Scientists had no doubt that these were the bones of the imperial family. And with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Tsar could be rehabilitated, or at least buried with honors.

President Boris Yeltsin, possibly Queen Elizabeth (a distant cousin of the Romanovs), and a host of Russian and foreign dignitaries were expected in St. Petersburg to watch the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, Aleksy II, bury Nicholas, Empress Alexandra, three of their daughters, the family doctor, and three servants, all of whom were slaughtered in a cellar in July, 1918. The broader significance of the service was that mourners would be asking forgiveness not only for the murder of the family but for the deaths of millions who subsequently perished unnaturally during the Communist era.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

Before invitations to the ceremony could be issued, there were details to iron out. The first problem was the division of the bones. Traditionally, sovereigns were buried more prominently than spouses, and children were always interred separately. In this case, however, because the bodies of the family and servants had been thrown hastily and indiscriminately into the same burial pit and had commingled there for several decades, there was a strong case for togetherness.

A second dilemma was whether the imperial family should be canonized. If they died as martyrs, as many Russians believe, then they must be treated as saints. This decision needed to be made before the funeral, because the procedures for burying saints are different from those for burying ordinary people. The judgment was complicated by the fact that the émigré Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which despises the Moscow church and misses no opportunity to heap its leadership with calumny, had already canonized the imperial family in 1981.

All these fine points became moot when Metropolitan Kyril revealed that as far as the church is concerned, the DNA testing has to be done over again, this time by a new set of Russian scientists. Dr. Pavel Ivanov, the Russian molecular biologist who carried samples of the Romanov bones to England and America, and who became a co-author of the papers that reported the positive DNA results, has apparently become a casualty of the insecurity of both religious and secular officials, who would prefer to put off decisions of this kind until it is clear who will be running the country after the Presidential elections in June.

THERE is also, of course, a significant quotient of ignorance about the nature of DNA among church elders, some of whom seem to have been listening to allegations by right-wing Russians, at home and abroad, that the grave site, the exhumation of the bodies, and the collection of evidence were faked. According to one scenario, only the Romanovs' heads survived, and they were brought long ago to a Kremlin basement, where Lenin liked to gaze at them and where they still reside. (There is a nasty whiff of anti-Semitism in some of these tales. The argument stems from the belief that the Tsar's murderers—including Lenin—were Jews, and that Jews ritualistically cut off and pickled their victims' heads.)

This is the fourth time that the funeral has been postponed, and if Metropolitan Kyril intends to go around the world looking for a new DNA lab, it may not be the last. In the meantime, the remains of Nicholas and Alexandra and their children continue to lie on metal tables in a morgue in Siberia.

## NOTES OF A HANGING JUDGE

SOON after New York State Supreme Court Justice Harold Rothwax called his court to order, the origins of his nickname, the Prince of Darkness, became evident. A young woman who was accused of embezzling twenty thousand dollars stood before him as her lawyer made his case for a reduction in bail: the woman was four months pregnant, she had spent the past several days in the prison hospital for bleeding, and her new husband, awaiting payment on a workers' compensation claim, had offered to sign the money over to his wife's creditors to get her out of jail. When the attorney apologized for rambling on about his client's problems, Judge Rothwax responded, "Go on, Counsellor. So far, I've got my sympathy well under control."

When the lawyer had finished, the Judge mulled over the issues for a moment. "She's four months pregnant? Well, she shouldn't have embezzled twenty grand, then," he snapped. "When she makes full restitution, she gets out of jail." The request was denied. The defense attorney grimaced, the woman's head dropped, and her husband, in the gallery, cursed and glared at the Judge. Rothwax didn't seem to notice; he had already moved on to the next case, greeting the attorneys with his usual no-frills salutation: "Come up here on this matter, please."

JUDGE ROTHWAX, who is sixty-five, started out as a criminal-defense attorney for the poor, was a member of the A.C.L.U., and for the last twenty-five years has served as a State Supreme Court Justice; he presided over the Joel Steinberg murder-and-child-abuse case and, more recently, the trial of the Brooklyn Bridge shooter, Rashid Baz. His legal career was inspired by Clarence Darrow and motivated by liberalism, but over time the Judge has become increasingly conservative. His conversion recently culminated in the publication of "Guilty: The Collapse of Criminal Justice," a memoirish diatribe against the legal system, in which Rothwax argues that "the American courtroom is dangerously out of order." His proposed solutions include permitting majority, rather than unanimous, criminal verdicts, dispensing with Miranda rights, limiting protections based on the Fourth and Fifth Amendments, and requiring defendants to put written versions of their stories into sealed envelopes before trial to prevent them from changing alibis. Such proposals are a defense attorney's—and a defendant's—nightmare.

Typically, there are about two hundred and fifty cases at various stages before Judge Rothwax's court. On a recent Wednesday, his "calendar day," the Judge held hearings on about a hundred of those cases. Stone-faced, sardonic, and with a rigid delivery that portended dire consequences for the accused, he denied bail for a seventy-year-old man charged with attempted murder, and heard arguments, ongoing for seven years, on a man's competency to stand trial. A prosecutor said the man was faking and called him "a malingerer."

"If so, he's one of the great malingerers of all time," Rothwax grumbled. "When he comes in here, he tries to eat himself, and he stabs himself with paper clips." Throughout the morning, the Judge saw convicted drug dealers, an accused child molester, two very large night-club bouncers charged with assault, and a man with twenty-nine misdemeanor convictions for shoplifting. By the lunch break, he had accepted three plea bargains, set four trial dates, and threatened a tardy attorney with contempt.

But even the Prince of Darkness—a nickname that the Judge wears as a kind of honorific—is seized by fits of mercy. A young man due to serve time upstate asked for a delay to get married; the Judge gave him six weeks. And several young first-time offenders received the same offer: complete a rehabilitation program and you get probation; fail the program and you go to jail.

Things were moving along pretty smoothly in Judge Rothwax's courtroom. In fact, it was difficult to find any evidence of the legal system's great "collapse": a lot of people were going to jail. Judicial missteps—like Judge Harold Baer's recent decision that police in Washington Heights had improperly seized four million dollars' worth of cocaine and heroin—may get all the press, but in reality more than eighty per cent of the felony indictments issued by the Manhattan D.A.'s office result in guilty pleas or jury convictions. The criminal-defense bar agrees with the Judge that there is a legal crisis but reads it quite differently. "The statistics show a phenomenal conviction rate," said Gerald Lefcourt, who co-founded the New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. "There are more people in prison in this country than ever before. Our incarceration rate is higher than any other democratic country's, and we have the death penalty. The notion that the system coddles criminals is off the wall."

In Judge Rothwax's courtroom, defense lawyers are more politic in their evaluation of his book. On calendar day, one even asked him to autograph it. The request, typically, was denied.

*Harold Rothwax*

## HE SELLS SIDESHOWS BY THE SEASHORE

A FEW weekends ago in Coney Island, Dick D. Zigun stood inside the raised steel-gray security gate of Sideshows by the Seashore hawking old cross-country skis, ice skates, board games, clothes, a mirrored beer sign, and other items from his past. Since December, Zigun has been running what he describes as "a sleazy little thrift shop" to raise money for his latest project. "A lot of the stuff my parents brought down from Bridgeport when they cleaned out the basement," said Zigun, the forty-two-year-old founder of Coney Island, U.S.A., the sideshow's nonprofit parent.

Last year, Zigun, who has an M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama, attracted international attention when his landlord threatened to evict his arts center, museum, and sideshow from the building it had occupied on the boardwalk since 1985. But through a settlement negotiated by his lawyers, Fred Samuels and Ron Kuby, Zigun was able to secure a ten-year lease on a vast building nearby, on West Twelfth Street and Surf Avenue. The history behind his new home delights Zigun. Before its most recent incarnation as a furniture warehouse, the two-story building was

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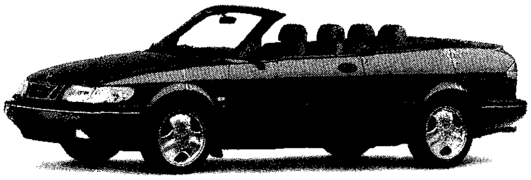

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the home of Wonderland Circus Sideshow, where Sealo the Seal Boy (a man with deformed arms) and Jojo the Dog-Faced Boy once performed.

Zigun, who has a graying goatee, tortoiseshell glasses, and a shock of long brown hair, currently shares what will become the dressing room with his pets, which include a pair of albino Burmese pythons. By June, he plans to convert the ground floor, where pink ostrich-feather wallpaper still hangs in decaying sheets, into a theatre for such sideshow stars as Kiva the fire-eater, Demonica the snake charmer, and the Great Fredini, a sword swallower. He hopes to reopen the Coney Island museum by next year. "It will be upstairs, with a café, so you can eat and look out the windows at the Cyclone and the Wonder Wheel," Zigun said as he stood between a stack of overflowing filing cabinets and a cream-colored bumper car. "Our operation is not only for hipsters. The official purpose of Coney Island, U.S.A., is to defend the honor of American popular culture."

## EXHORTATION

You have not, as I, walked
the silent sleeping streets,
with streaming eyes, running
from the women in the windows.
You have not slid, as I have slid,
under the seas to see the shells,
smiling and swimming silently.
You have not seen the moon
  running along the sky.
So shut up.

—Mike Nichols

## BONHOMIE FOR A SOUTHERN BELLETRIST

*Eudora Welty*

On a recent sunny Thursday in Jackson, just moments before she was presented with the French Legion of Honor, the great Mississippi writer Eudora Welty found time to update a memory of H. L. Mencken, the sometimes amusing Baltimore sorehead. "When the Tombigbee River rose in 1927," Miss Welty said in her intimate, low-registered, softly timbred voice, reminiscent of the hushed voices children hear through walls when adults are telling the good stories, "I was a student at the Mississippi State College for Women, and I wrote in the *Spectator*, which was the student newspaper, that the flood had had a good side to it, since it'd reduced our overcrowding in the dormitories. At the time, we *were* all packed in our rooms like sardines. And Mencken read my story. What he was doing reading a li'l ole school paper from Mississippi I don't know. But he took it seriously and wrote in *his* newspaper that things were in such a terrible shape down in Mississippi that students were just being allowed to float away."

Miss Welty gazed up at her listener and for a moment seemed to grow grave, which is the deadpan she has always pulled when a story's funnier than you might be aware. Her pale-blue eyes wandered toward the tall windows of the Old State Capitol Building, where, inside a tiny office under the portraits of bearded past Mississippi governors, she and a few of her good friends were waiting for the solemnities to begin. They were only four blocks from where Miss Welty was born, and only a few more from where she has lived, on Pinehurst Street, the rest of her life. "Of course," she said, seeming now bemused by how long ago it could've been that the Tombigbee flooded, "I guess I didn't have to be such a smart-aleck."

The Légion d'Honneur is the highest award the French bestow on anybody. Napoleon conceived it in 1802, and to let you know how seriously the French take it, Sartre is said to have turned it down. Speaking the language is not a prerequisite, but implicitly one senses the French would be tickled if you'd try a few words.

Miss Welty is much studied and cherished by French readers, her acclaim emanating from her luminous, deeply humane, and high-spirited stories, novels, memoirs, and photographs—most set in Mississippi—which the French and a preponderance of Americans agree transcend "Southern concerns" by their capacity to lift barriers that have separated us, causing us to understand our common humanity.

For such an august occasion, the French Republic dispatched its Consul General, a M. Gérard Blanchot, a substantial, suitably urbane but happily talkative man, who, it was reported, had driven over from Atlanta with several cases of Laurent-Perrier in his trunk.

M. Blanchot, by speaking interesting English, managed to charm everybody at the ceremony, which was convened in the dignified House of Representatives chamber and attended by five hundred or so of Miss Welty's admirers, friends, and relations. In his short, convivial speech, which gave evidence of appreciating the guest of honor in precisely the respectful yet droll way she enjoys conducting her own life, the Consul suggested that although the French were sometimes thought (quite unfairly) to be arrogant, they always had their eye set keenly on "the world's culture" and so could not possibly ignore Miss Welty.

Others spoke in the historic old room, where in 1860 Mississippi had taken the rash step of seceding from America. A handsome and expensively dressed academicienne talked about how Miss Welty's rich work had freed younger writers of the South from the confinements of those previously mentioned Southern themes. After that, an exuberant French filmmaker, also expensively dressed, spoke with eloquence about how Miss Welty's writing was responsible for her own personal reconciliation with her birthplace.

And then Miss Welty, who all this time had sat not at all inconspicuously at the front of the crowd, facing her honorers and listening attentively to the praise, simply got up and at her own speed, wearing a pretty black-and-white silk dress and a look one could only describe as wonder mingled with delight, came forward and let the medal with its bright-red ribbon be pinned on. Following which, everyone in the room, accompanied undoubtedly by the spirits of those not in attendance on that memorable bluebird day, stood up as one, and for quite a few minutes applauded as though the honor were ours, as well. ♦

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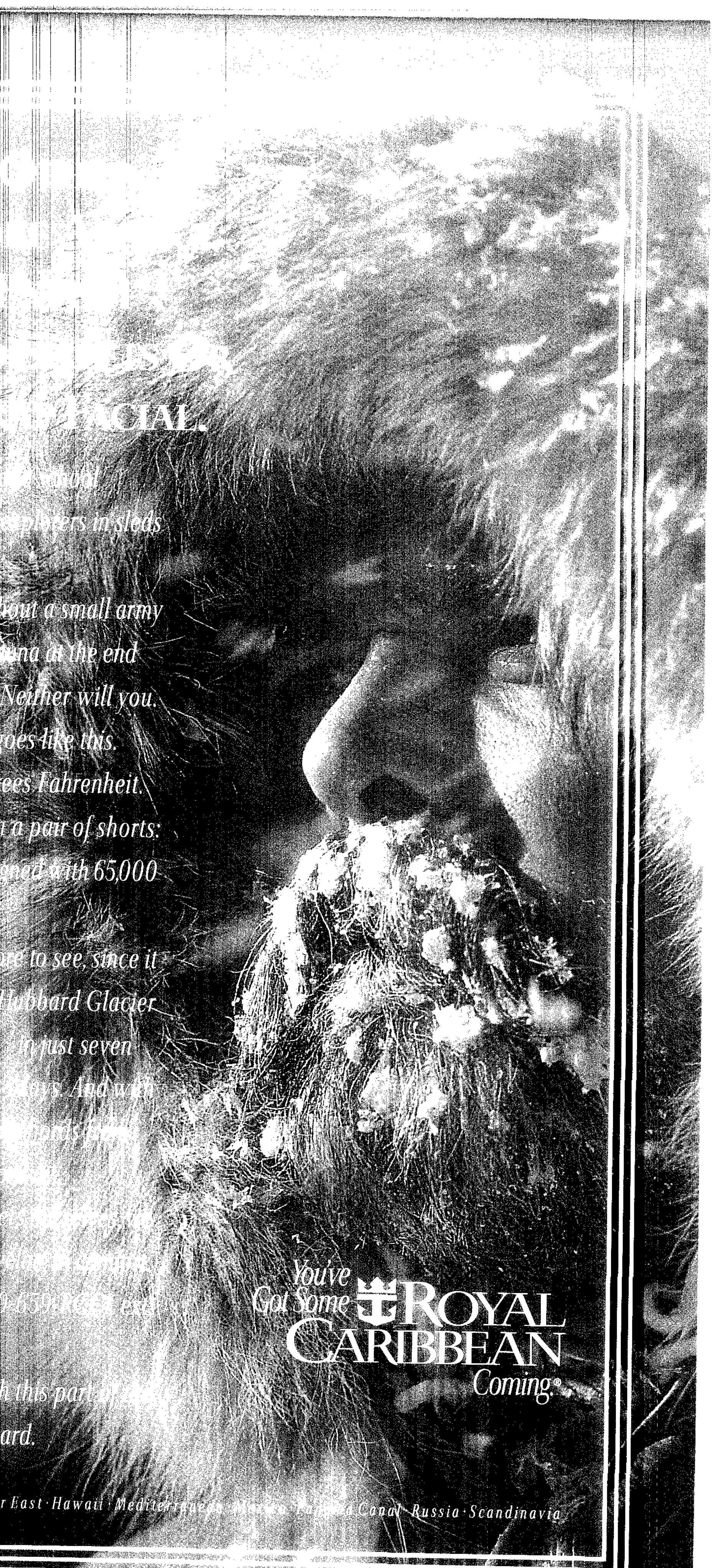
*"Bones of Contention," Robert K. Massie; "Notes of a Hanging Judge," Warren St. John; "He Sells Sideshows by the Seashore," John J. Donohue; "Bonhomie for a Southern Belletrist," Richard Ford.*

# THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO EXPLORE [illegible] BUT DON'T [illegible] FRESHLY TURNED [illegible] AN HERBAL WRAP FACIAL.



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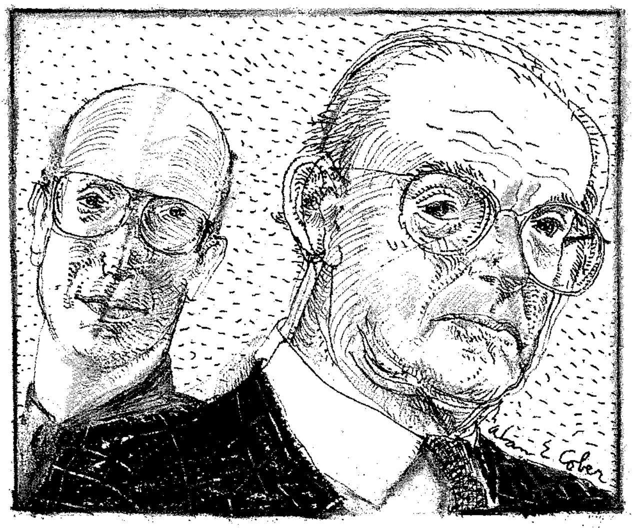
ANNALS OF FINANCE

# FLEEING THE FED

*Why did Bill Clinton's appointee leave Alan Greenspan?*

BY JOHN CASSIDY

THE headquarters of the Federal Reserve Board, which overlooks the Washington Mall, was constructed during the Great Depression, and seems to have been designed as an expression of confidence in the capitalist system. Stretching an entire city block along Constitution Avenue in the area of the capital known as Foggy Bottom, it is a handsome white building that features Roman columns, tall, dark windows, and a forbidding brass front door.



*Account closed: Alan Blinder and Greenspan.*

ALAN COBER

Visitors enter through a back entrance, on C Street, and find themselves in a large atrium, which usually contains an art exhibition. A big marble staircase leads to the inner sanctum of the nation's central bank—the governors' floor. The office of Alan Greenspan, the sixty-nine-year-old chairman of the Fed, is down the corridor to the right. Next to his office is the vice-chairman's office, which until the start of this month was occupied by Alan Blinder, an economics professor at Princeton, who in 1994 became the first Federal Reserve governor in fourteen years to be appointed by a Democratic President.

Blinder (whose name is pronounced with a long "i") served only eighteen months. The White House wanted to nominate him again, for a full fourteen-year term, but he decided to return to Princeton instead. The circumstances behind his departure provide an unusual perspective on one of the country's most powerful and secretive institutions. It is a story about how a brilliant and well-meaning but, perhaps, somewhat naïve academic received a brutal education in the realities of politics and power. Blinder tried to make the Fed more open and accessible to the public, but he came up against a chairman and a senior staff who were devoted to old ways of doing business. Frustrated, he eventually came to the reluctant conclusion that he no longer wanted the vice-chairman's job. The Clinton Administration is considering replacing him with Felix Rohatyn, the Lazard Frères investment banker who has long been a prominent figure in Democratic Party circles. Before Rohatyn accepts the job—which requires that he be confirmed by the Republican Senate—he might consider the fate of his predecessor.

WHEN I arrived at the Fed to interview Blinder in late January, a week before his official departure date, he was busy packing boxes of files for the move back to Princeton. At fifty, he is a slight, wiry man with gray hair around his ears, a bald dome, glasses, and a slight tic in his right eye. Most of the time, he looks older than he is, but occasionally his angular face breaks into a grin that takes years off him. This happened when I asked him to describe

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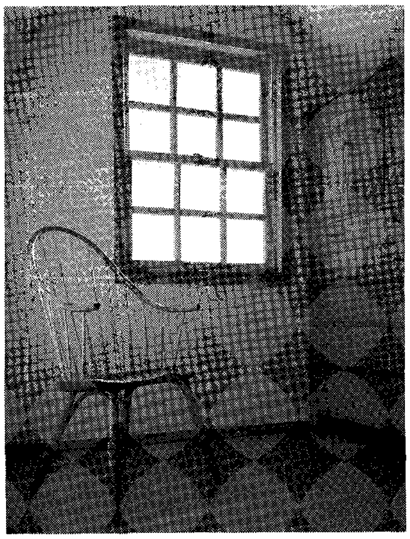

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a typical farewell party for a Federal Reserve governor. "This is not the sort of place where people get drunk and dance on the tables," he replied.

When asked about Blinder, his friends and colleagues invariably point to his wry sense of humor and to his intellect. "Exceptional, fabulous, breathtaking," says Eugene Ludwig, the Comptroller of the Currency, who worked with Blinder frequently on issues of banking regulation during his Fed tenure. "I went to Oxford, I did pretty well at law school, and I think I know a little about people who are pretty terrific. But he is awesome." Alicia Munnell, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, says of Blinder, "He can describe the most complicated phenomena in the simplest terms. In his mind he has a whole model of the economy, and he can translate it in a way that makes it very comprehensible."

Blinder, who was born in Brooklyn in 1945, was an undergraduate at Princeton during the mid-sixties and then went to graduate school at the London School of Economics and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After earning his doctorate from M.I.T., in 1971, he went back to Princeton to join the economics faculty. There he stayed for twenty-one years, gaining a reputation as one of the country's leading experts on monetary and fiscal policy.

Among fellow-economists, Blinder has always been seen as a liberal. "In the economics profession, there is a widespread desire to be tough-minded, and a tendency to conclude from that that you must be devoid of any human sensibility altogether," Robert Solow, an M.I.T. economist who supervised Blinder's Ph.D. thesis, says. "Alan is just not like that. He can do macroeconomics with a human face." Blinder has always been interested in politics. During the nineteen-seventies, he spent some time at the Congressional Budget Office. In the mid-eighties, he was a fellow at the Brookings Institution. He advised Michael Dukakis in 1988 and Bill Clinton in 1992. When Clinton won the Presidency, Blinder was widely expected to become chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. The job went to Laura D'Andrea Tyson, a classmate of Blinder's from M.I.T. whom few regarded as his intellectual equal. Instead of sulking, Blinder accepted a position under Tyson on the C.E.A.

Among the President's economic advisers, Blinder was seen as a budget-deficit hawk who supported Clinton's controversial 1993 program of tax increases and spending cuts. "He was a moderating force in policymaking in the White House," Bowman Cutter, a senior Clinton economic adviser, recalls. Blinder also served as an occasional homework consultant to Chelsea Clinton. The President has found it increasingly difficult, as his daughter gets older, to help her with her math homework. On a couple of occasions, he asked Blinder to help out with Chelsea's algebra problems.

In April of 1994, Clinton nominated Blinder to succeed David Mullins as vice-chairman of the Fed. (All seven Federal Reserve governors are appointed by the President and have to be confirmed by the Senate.) The choice caused some consternation on Wall Street and in banking circles, where Blinder was seen as an inflation dove. According to one story, which may be apocryphal, Chairman Greenspan was approached by another Fed governor soon after Blinder's nomination. His early writings make him seem soft on inflation, "but it's not that he's a Communist," the governor said. "I would have preferred if he were a Communist," Greenspan is said to have replied.

In a democracy, the primary role of the central bank is to ward off inflation. Blinder's record raised some legitimate doubts, especially because he was then widely viewed as a strong contender to succeed Greenspan as chairman in 1996. During the seventies and eighties, while many economists were embracing the conservative theories propounded by Robert Lucas, of the University of Chicago, Blinder kept the Keynesian flame burning. According to Lucas's "rational expectations" model, the Fed could not systematically affect unemployment by altering monetary policy (raising or lowering interest rates), so reducing inflation should be its sole aim. Blinder believed that Lucas's theories were based on unrealistic assumptions and didn't stand up to empirical testing. He thought that history had proved repeatedly that, by changing interest rates, the Fed could have a major impact on economic out-

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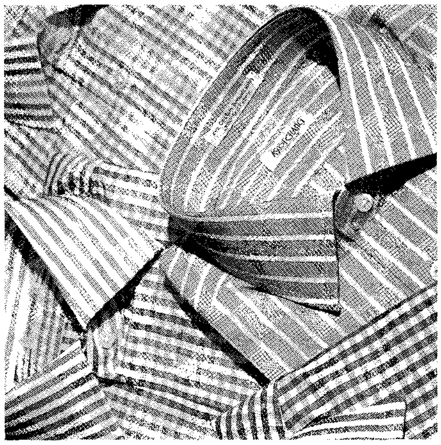

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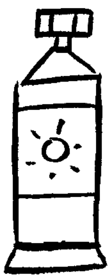
put and employment. Blinder “is a modern, up-to-date Keynesian,” James Tobin, an economist at Yale, says. “He’s not a guy who thinks you can raise output indefinitely by printing money, or that you can drive unemployment down to zero without raising inflation. But he does not agree that you should do nothing in terms of monetary policy.”

Blinder was a columnist for *Business Week* in the eighties and early nineties, and was a frequent critic of Fed policy, especially under the former chairman, Paul Volcker, who in order to reduce double-digit inflation induced the 1980-81 recession and kept interest rates artificially high into the mid-eighties. “The past history of the Fed shows an unhealthy respect for inflation alarmists,” Blinder wrote in 1988.



On the basis of his record, many analysts predicted clashes between Blinder and Greenspan over interest rates. As it turned out, however, Blinder’s major differences with his colleagues at the Fed did not revolve around monetary policy, which is decided by a twelve-person vote of the Federal Open Market Committee. (Seven seats on the F.O.M.C. go to the Federal Reserve governors; one goes to the president of the New York Fed; the four places remaining rotate among the other regional Feds that make up the nation’s central banking system.) Indeed, in his time at the Fed, Blinder never once voted against Greenspan. Between February of 1994 and February of 1995, the Fed increased short-term interest rates seven times, raising them from three per cent to six per cent over that period. Since last July, as growth in the economy has slowed, the Fed has cut interest rates three times. The last occasion was at a January 30th F.O.M.C. meeting (which Blinder did not attend), when the federal-funds rate was reduced from 5.5 per cent to 5.25 per cent.

“As far as his record goes, he never cast a dissenting vote, and for much of the time he was here we were raising interest rates in order to try and make sure the economy did not overshoot,” Janet Yellen, a former Berkeley economist who was appointed to the Fed board shortly after Blinder, says. “Clearly, he was a person who recognized that there was a need to tighten [monetary policy] when there was a danger that inflation would rise.”

In fact, Blinder proved to be less of an inflation dove than Lawrence Lindsey, a conservative economist from Harvard, who had been appointed to the Fed by George Bush. While Lindsey voted against Greenspan at last November’s F.O.M.C. meeting, arguing that the Fed should cut interest rates immediately, Blinder sided with the chairman in agreeing to wait a while longer. When I suggested to Blinder that perhaps his views had changed since he wrote for *Business Week*, he said, “No. What did change in me is that as long as I sit in this job I have a special responsibility that as a professor and magazine columnist I didn’t have. As a Federal Reserve governor, you are sitting here as the only bulwark against inflation. You need to take that seriously, and I always have.”

Blinder was an influential voice for moderation on the F.O.M.C. He regularly reminded his colleagues of the basic tenet of the medical profession: first, do no harm. “The kind of mistake the Fed has made in the past is to overreact by moving the levers at its disposal too much, which risks exacerbating movements rather than mitigating them,” Yellen says. “I often felt sitting there listening to one of his contributions that he was reminding me and the rest of the F.O.M.C. of that lesson of history.”

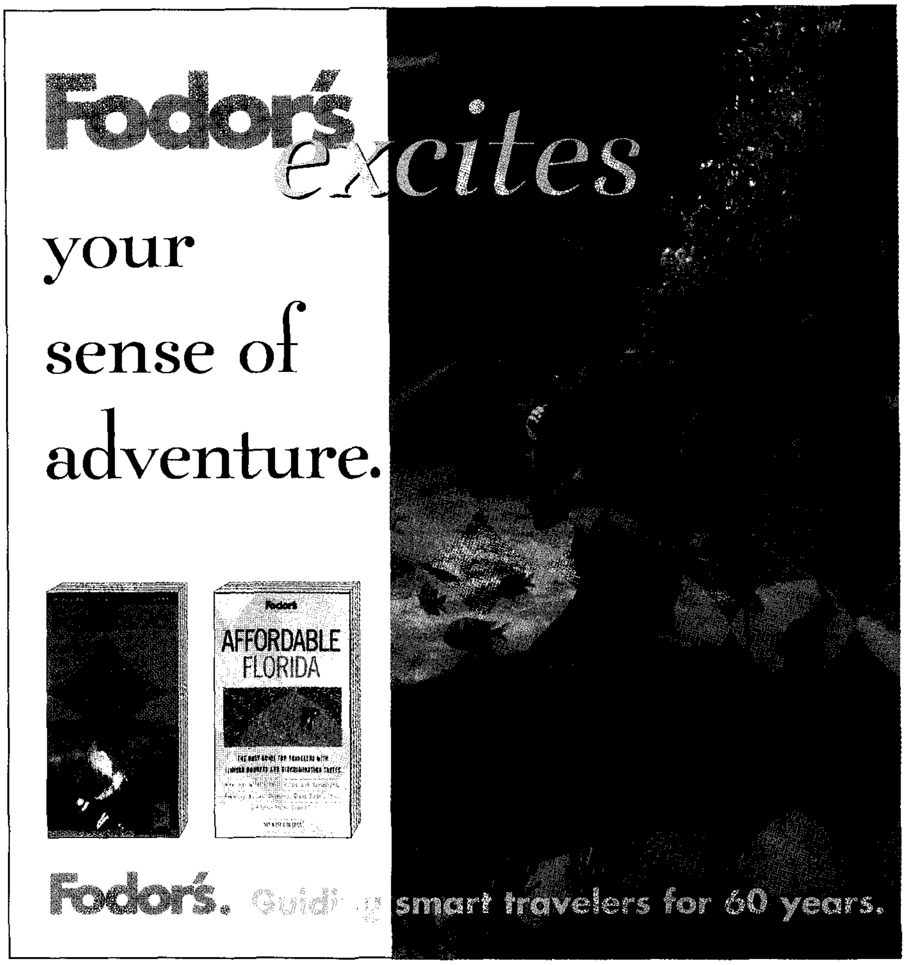
GIVEN Blinder’s support for Greenspan’s anti-inflationary strategy, it may seem surprising that he became something of an outsider at the central bank. The reasons had far less to do with monetary policy than with internal politics. “Blinder came in and looked like he was going to shake up the place,” one senior Fed official says. “You have an institution here where the Board of Governors is supposed, by design of legislation, to run the place. It is really run by the chairman and the senior staff, with the board having a certain rubber-stamp authority. The vice-chairman wasn’t going to put up with it. He was looking for changes.”

When Blinder arrived at the Fed, the first thing he noticed was how quiet his office was. He had expected swarms of Fed staffers to be rushing through his door regularly with the latest news about the economy and the markets, but nobody came. “There was very, very little of people coming in and saying, ‘Hey, you ought to know about such-and-such,’ ” Blinder recalled. “Much, much less than I imagined, given the staff resources around here.”

There was a reason for the lack of economic data reaching Blinder. Virtually all the information generated by the Fed’s staff is filtered through the powerful division heads, who report directly to Greenspan. They are: Michael Prell, the director of research and statistics; Donald Kohn, the director of monetary affairs; Edwin Truman, the director of international finance; and Richard Spillenkothen, the director of banking supervision. It is difficult to exaggerate the power of these senior officials. “I often said when we were assembled together in a meeting that the governors work for the staff instead of the other way around,” John LaWare, who resigned from the Fed’s board last year, recalls.

Prell, Kohn, Truman, and Spillenkothen have more than seventy years of Fed experience among them. One measure of their influence is their salaries. Each of them is said to earn more than Greenspan, and that fact was confirmed by Joseph Coyne, the Fed’s spokesman. Coyne said he couldn’t reveal exact salaries, because of the Privacy Act, but he did say that each of the four division heads earns more than a hundred and sixty thousand dollars a year. Greenspan’s salary is $133,600; the other governors, including the vice-chairman, make $123,100.

Once in office, Blinder was also disappointed to find that there was only one weekly staff briefing for the governors, and that it tended to be a formal presentation by staff members. The vice-chairman had expected frequent, informal meetings to discuss policy issues with the relevant staff experts. To his surprise, there weren’t any such meetings, even though the Fed has one of the country’s top economic-research organizations. The thing that surprised Blinder most was the way decisions were made by the board. Most of the time, the governors were presented with only one option: the staff recommendation. “There was a real reluctance to advance alternative points of view,” Blinder says. “Com-



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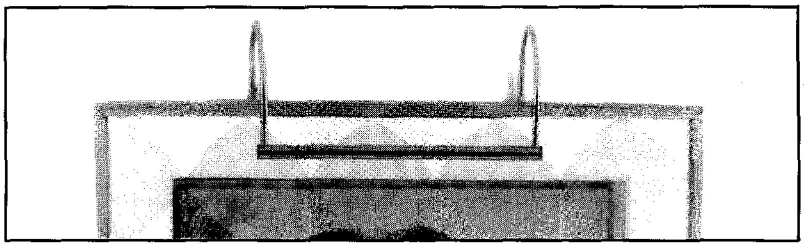

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ing from the background I came from, I found that extremely odd. I don't know of any interesting question in economic or social policy to which there is only one clear answer."

At times, the vice-chairman found himself so subservient to the staff that he felt like the main character on the British television comedy "Yes, Minister," which features a hapless politician who is dominated by his underlings. "This agency is probably the closest thing in the United States government to a British ministry, where the permanent civil servants, who are highly skilled and deeply entrenched, dominate," Blinder says. "The 'Yes, Minister' attitude is very strong."

In an attempt to reform the Fed's mummified culture, Blinder set up regular meetings with junior officials to discuss policy matters in their areas. He also asked the senior staffers to produce policy options for the governors instead of a single recommendation. Neither effort met with more than limited success. "This is an institution that is deeply conservative and moves very, very slowly," Blinder says. "And I was here only a year and a half."

Blinder's difficulties were compounded by strains in his relationship with Greenspan, who has been the Fed chairman since 1987 and is likely to be nominated for another four years when his current term ends, next month. The tensions were due in part to the two men's contrasting temperaments and beliefs. Blinder is an easygoing Democrat, whose political philosophy is suggested by the title of a book that he wrote and published in 1987: "Hard Heads, Soft Hearts: Tough-Minded Economics for a Just Society." Greenspan is a dour Republican whose demeanor earned him the nickname The Brilliant Undertaker from his fellow-members of Ayn Rand's Collective during the nineteen-fifties.

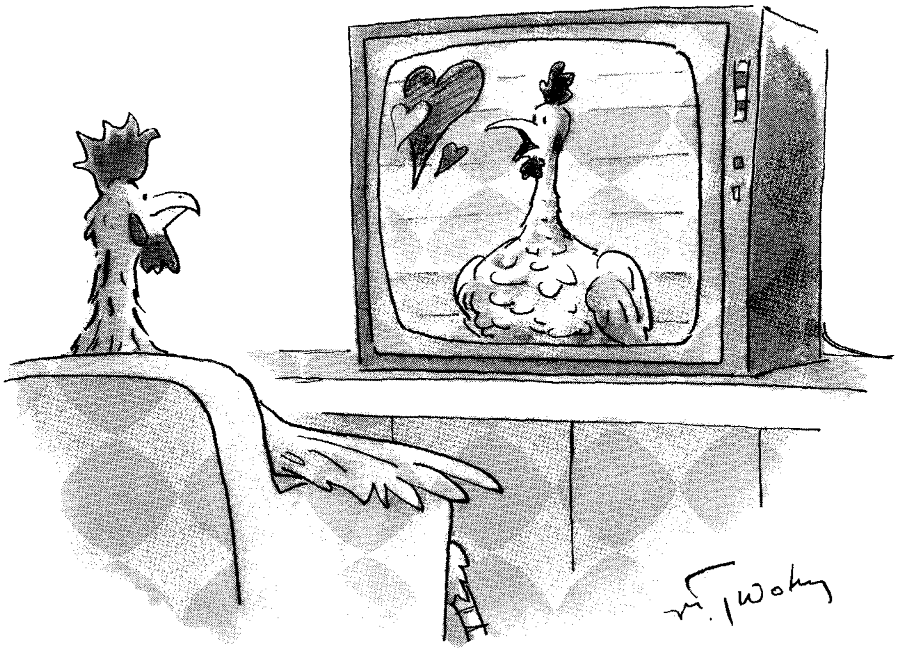
Despite the ideological differences, Blinder was hoping to work closely with Greenspan. But while he performed all the usual functions of a governor he soon found that his role as vice-chairman consisted largely of filling in for the boss on foreign trips—most often at meetings of the Bank for International Settlements, in Basel—and greeting visiting dignitaries whom the chairman didn't have time to see. Although Greenspan treated Blinder with unfailing politeness, he made little effort to build a personal relationship. Despite the fact that their offices were side by side, the two men often went for more than a week at a time without speaking to each other. On a few occasions, Blinder and his wife, Madeline, had dinner with Greenspan and his friend Andrea Mitchell, of NBC, but these social contacts were rare.

When I asked Blinder about his relationship with Greenspan, he said that he had been surprised by the limited contact, but added that he didn't interpret it as a personal slight. "Our relations were businesslike and cordial," Blinder said. "We weren't feuding, or anything like that."

Maybe not, but other sources maintained that there were tensions between the two Fed officials throughout Blinder's tenure. "Both people have good manners, so there was no yelling, but I don't think the chairman did anything to make Alan's job easier," one former Fed official says. "The chairman can be quite charming, but he is a very skilled Washington operator. If he wants to make your life difficult, he can." (Greenspan declined requests to be interviewed for this article, as has been his pattern since he became Fed chairman.)

A senior Fed official explains the relationship between Blinder and Greenspan this way: "Being vice-chairman is like being Vice-President. The job is what the chairman wants to make it. It can be very little or it can be one in which you are a close confidant of the chairman and carry major responsibility independently. In this case, it was not the latter."

Several observers said that Greenspan saw Blinder as a threat and acted accordingly. "The chairman is not a secure individual," says Bert Ely, an Alexandria, Virginia, banking consultant who specializes in Fed issues. "He has to be the one in the spotlight, and he doesn't want competition. Blinder was somebody who was extremely well qualified to challenge Greenspan." But some Fed officials defended Greenspan's aloof attitude toward Blinder. They suggested that Blinder had come in with unduly high expectations of a job that had never been invested with much clout. "My feeling is that the title of vice-chairman is honorific and means



*"I'm into whole grains and long dirt baths, and I'm looking for someone who's not afraid to cross the road."*

• •

very little in terms of power," Lyle Gramley, a former Fed governor, said.

THE most controversial incident of Blinder's brief Fed career came just a couple of months after he arrived. It occurred in the unlikely setting of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City holds an annual two-day economics conference. In August of 1994, the theme of the meeting was "Reducing Unemployment." The conference unfolded with a number of economists' giving presentations on the high levels of unemployment then besetting the United States and Europe. Most laid the blame for the unemployment rates—6.1 per cent in the United States and more than ten per cent in much of Europe—on institutional factors like strong trade unions and generous welfare payments, which prevented labor markets from working properly. Although the rates seemed high, most of the speakers concluded that unemployment in the United States was actually close to what economists call its "natural rate," which is the minimum level it can reach without causing inflation to accelerate. A guest at the conference, Roger Brinner, the chief economist at DRI/McGraw-Hill, summed up what he saw: "Central bankers and their guests got together to decide why unemployment was so high. Their options were to blame central banks' monetary policy or to blame labor-market policies. It shouldn't come as any surprise that they decided the labor market was the problem," he said.

Blinder had been invited to make a closing speech at the conference. He began by joking that in his new job he was expected to say nothing of substance. Instead, he delivered an address in which he disagreed with many of the previous speakers. "In my view, central banks—or, more generally, macroeconomic policies—do indeed have a role in reducing unemployment as well as reducing inflation," he said. He reminded his audience that the Fed has a legal obligation to consider employment as well as inflation in setting policy, and argued that all central banks should try to stabilize their economies, just as Keynes had advocated sixty years before. In the long run, it was true that the Fed couldn't reduce unemployment below its natural rate. But in the short run—up to five years—it could have a considerable effect.

Brinner and most of the other economists present didn't think that Blinder's remarks were startling. "What he said was the stuff of every intermediate-macroeconomics textbook," Janet Yellen recalls. But one journalist, Keith Bradsher of the *Times*, disagreed. His story in the following day's paper began, "Alan S.

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Who look toward us before they fold shimmery cheeks
Into the ripples and disappear. Are they mating,
We wonder. Or suckling their pups. Or just playing.

Touching your shoulder for a second longer takes me
Below the surface, and there I move among the seals
Without frightening them, a shepherd among his sheep
Going over them all and counting his flock by fives
And rescuing one lamb from the seaweedy tangle.

—Michael Longley

Blinder, the vice chairman of the Federal Reserve, publicly broke ranks with most of his colleagues today, saying he believed that the nation's central bank should seek to hold down unemployment in setting interest rates." Blinder's comments, the story continued, "revealed an intellectual split within the Federal Reserve" and were "especially significant because he is a leading candidate to head the central bank when Mr. Greenspan's term expires early in 1996." Greenspan, Bradsher noted, had recently expressed support for a congressional bill that would make zero inflation the Fed's primary goal.

For the first time in his life, Blinder found himself in the middle of a media controversy. The next day, Bradsher filed another story from Jackson Hole, this one predicting clashes ahead at the Fed now that Blinder was "publicly challenging the views of his boss." Blinder's speech had "appeared to anger some colleagues," Bradsher reported, and one senior Fed official referred to him as an "outlier"—a statistical term for a point on a graph which is a long way from all the other points.

The rest of the media rushed to catch up on the story of a purported schism at the top of the Fed. Eventually, the attacks on Blinder turned personal. "Put simply, Blinder is 'soft' on inflation," Robert Samuelson, of *Newsweek*, wrote. Given this failing, Samuelson thundered, "Blinder lacks the moral or intellectual qualities needed to lead the Fed."

When I asked Blinder about the Jackson Hole flap, he winced slightly and replied, "I guess I think now what I thought then, that it was a tempest in a teapot. It was a case of a small number of journalists, starting with one, making a big deal out of something that was nothing—that coupled with a few knives stuck in my back." Blinder reached over to a bookshelf in his office, plucked out a copy of the book of statutes that govern the Fed, and pointed to a passage describing the Fed's mandate, as it had been laid down by a 1978 act of Congress. "To promote effectively the goals of maximum employment, stable prices and moderate long term interest rates," the passage read. "What I said was perfectly consistent with the Fed's behavior before I was on the board, while I have been on the board, and, I'm sure, after I leave the board. It was also perfectly consistent with what our legal mandate requires us to do."

Blinder's point is well taken, but at the Fed, as elsewhere in Washington, perception is just as important as reality. The perception that emerged from the Jackson Hole conference was that the vice-chairman was isolated from the rest of the Fed board and out of touch with traditional central-bank views. For a person with aspirations to the Fed chairmanship, Blinder had made a disastrous error. Even some of his friends say he was guileless in not realizing how his speech might be exploited by adversaries inside the Fed. "What Alan would probably acknowledge is that he wasn't sensitive enough toward the rituals," the White House aide Bowman Cutter said. Ely, the banking consultant, was more blunt: "He should not have been surprised at what happened. That

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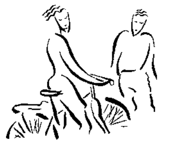

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shows a certain naïveté about how Washington operates."

Blinder declined to speculate on the identities of those at the Fed who might have put the knives in his back. Coyne, the Fed spokesman, said he did not know who spoke to the *Times*. "It wasn't me, and it wasn't the chairman," he said brusquely. One other notable aspect of the Jackson Hole controversy was Greenspan's refusal to make any public comment. His failure to put an end to the story by speaking out in defense of Blinder angered some of the vice-chairman's friends. "Greenspan simply let it dangle," one said. "He had ample opportunity to say, 'This is no big deal,' but he never did that." According to Coyne, the Fed spokesman, the chairman went on vacation immediately after the Jackson Hole conference and had had no reason to comment anyway. Coyne reacted angrily to the suggestion that Greenspan might have deliberately left Blinder twisting in the wind. "Why should he say anything?" he said. "It was a tempest in a teapot. It was all blown up by the New York *Times*."

THE large boardroom of the Federal Reserve is dominated by a vast mahogany table, around which twenty-five people can sit comfortably in large chairs. On one wall is a display of thousand-dollar, five-thousand-dollar, and ten-thousand-dollar bills dating back to 1918. On another is a large map of the United States. At a two-day meeting early last year, the twelve members of the F.O.M.C. and the senior staff were seated around the table. Most of the governors and most of the staffers did not like what they were hearing: Blinder was arguing that the Fed should tell the public a lot more about what goes on in these meetings.

Blinder laid out a case he has often made in public. He said that the central bank, as one of the most powerful institutions in the country—and one that is unelected—owed it to Americans to explain exactly why it acted as it did. The public didn't need to know specifically who said what in these meetings, Blinder argued, but it had a right to full disclosure of the reasons that the decisions were made. Greater forthrightness from the Fed wasn't just politically desirable; it also made economic sense. By explaining what factors it took into account in

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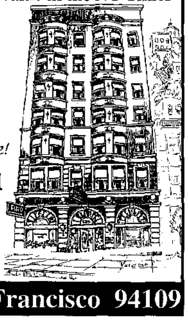

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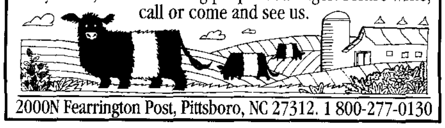

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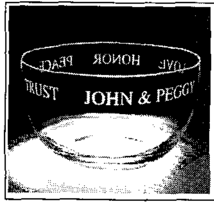

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raising or lowering interest rates, the Fed would reduce uncertainty and confusion in the financial markets. At the moment, the Fed's secrecy led to unnecessary market volatility.

Blinder had been waiting months to raise the secrecy issue before the F.O.M.C., but most of the governors and staffers who heard his suggestions strongly disagreed. They subscribed to the traditional Fed view that secrecy is essential for the successful conduct of monetary policy. Saying too much could damage the anti-inflationary credibility of the Fed or lock it into a policy that might subsequently prove mistaken. Far better to keep the policymaking process murky and maintain a maximum degree of discretion. "It is fair to say that virtually everybody on the committee took the opposite point of view, with very few exceptions," Blinder recalls. "I made my case and I lost."

Several people I spoke to disputed Blinder's view that more Fed openness would reduce volatility in the financial markets. As evidence to the contrary, one former Fed governor cited Wall Street's reaction to Blinder's frequent public statements while he was vice-chairman. "The markets would interpret his statements one way one day and another way the next," Gramley says. "In the end, markets may have been even more volatile than before." Avoiding upsetting the markets is widely seen as the first rule of being a Fed governor. Greenspan, of course, is the master of the opaque. On the few occasions when he does make public statements, his tortuous syntax is often incomprehensible. One speech he made last June prompted a *Times* headline that read "GREENSPAN SEES CHANCE OF RECESSION." The Washington *Post* reported the same speech under the headline "RECESSION IS UNLIKELY, GREENSPAN CONCLUDES."

According to a former Fed official, the chairman and his staff fear that greater openness could threaten the central bank's unusual degree of independence. Although Greenspan reports to Congress twice a year on monetary policy, the Fed is not subject to the same oversight that most other federal agencies get. For example, it writes its own budget—a small part of which is financed from interest received on loans made to commercial banks—and sets its own salary levels. Greenspan and most of his colleagues believe that the Fed has already taken a major step toward greater disclosure by publicly announcing the results of F.O.M.C. meetings the day after they take place—a policy formalized in February of 1995. Until then, Wall Street and the public had to infer changes in Fed policy from what action it took in the money markets. Coyne says, "Blinder wanted more than the board was doing, but I think we are doing a lot already." Gramley adds, "The greater openness at the Fed predates Alan Blinder. It started when Alan Greenspan took over."

By last summer, it had become clear to Blinder that as vice-chairman he was never going to have the influence he wanted. And with the Republicans in control of Congress it was inconceivable that he could be confirmed if nominated for chairman. Discreetly, he let a few friends in the White House know that he was considering returning to Princeton when his term on the board ended, in January. Each of them tried to persuade him to change his mind. "There should be no question that the Clinton Administration wanted him to stay, more than anything," Alicia Munnell said.

For months, Blinder struggled with the decision. He felt that he had a duty to the public and to the President who had appointed him. Although he hadn't achieved what he wanted to at the Fed, he felt that he had accomplished some things of note: raised the quality of intellectual debate on monetary policy, increased the weight given to consumer interests in banking issues, and shaken up the bureaucracy a bit. If he stayed, perhaps he could do more.

Yet he was aware of what he would have to give up to remain in Washington. If he didn't return to Princeton now, he would lose his professorship, and would probably have to sell a beautiful house he had built there. As an academic and a consultant, he could make far more than the $123,100 that he earned at the Fed. His Princeton salary alone was a good deal more than that. What's more, he and Madeline had never really settled in Washington. Did they want to commit themselves to a full fourteen years there? By the time that full term on the board had ended, he would be sixty-four. "It was a very difficult decision," Blinder told me. "You have to decide whether you are getting enough personal satisfaction or accomplishing enough to justify the personal sacrifices you have to make. It was a very tight call. In the end, I decided no, I wasn't."

LAST week, Blinder started teaching his first course back at Princeton—Money and Banking. "I'm glad to have him back in the economics profession, but I think it is a loss to the country that he is not down there on the Federal Reserve Board," the Yale economist James Tobin says. From Washington, Gene Ludwig echoes that sentiment: "I'm sure he'll do a great job at Princeton, but I would frankly have much rather seen him stay here. Alan Greenspan I like quite well. He's a friend of mine. But Blinder is certainly up to the job of chairman, or a Cabinet position. I hope someday he will be."

Now that Blinder is gone, the question that is being asked in the financial community is how well Greenspan will get along with his successor, especially if it is Rohatyn. Rohatyn is opinionated and is used to getting his own way. He is widely believed to favor cutting interest rates further in order to boost economic growth. With his strong links to the business community, he is sympathetic to the argument that the economy could now grow appreciably faster without boosting inflation, because it is far more efficient than it was. Greenspan remains much more dubious about the so-called productivity revival, and his skepticism is shared by Blinder.

"I would love to believe we can grow a good deal faster without inflation, but I don't see the evidence for it," Blinder says. On the basis of his reading of the statistical evidence, he thinks that the natural rate of unemployment is about 5.6 per cent, only slightly below the current rate of 5.8 per cent, and that the maximum rate at which the economy can grow without sparking higher inflation is about 2.5 per cent a year (or two per cent, under the Commerce Department's new measure). As a banker rather than an economist, Rohatyn may be less easily persuaded by the inconclusive findings of the dismal science and more willing to play his own hunches, even if that means opposing the chairman. In the end, Greenspan may end up wishing he had popped next door to speak to Blinder more often. ♦

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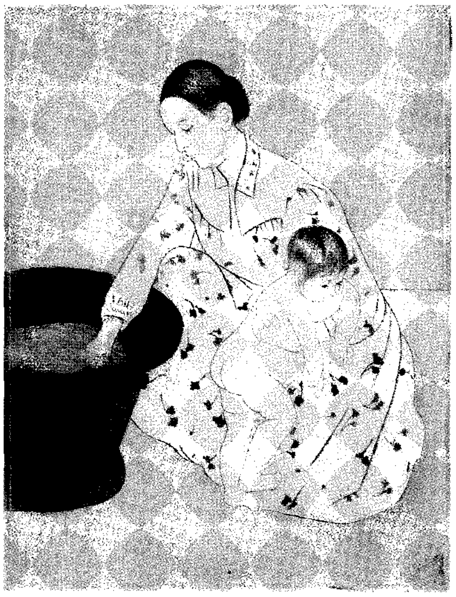
DOMESTIC LIFE

# THE EROS OF PARENTHOOD

*Not touching children can also be a crime.*

BY NOELLE OXENHANDLER

"WE call him Folds," a friend once wrote, in a rapture over the voluptuous plumpness of his baby son. My own daughter was delicate—even a bit worrisomely so—but what I wrote again and again in her baby book was "She is too much." When I read those words now, I remember how palpably I experienced her too-muchness: it was a kind of shudder in my body, an energy I had to soften, rein in, lest I squeeze her too hard, startle her with too exuberant a kiss.



*"The Bath," 1891, by Mary Cassatt.*

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We call our children "honey," and "dumpling," and "pumpkin," and "sweetie pie." We tell them, "Oh, I could eat you!" And what this exclamation gives voice to is both the experience of being overwhelmed by their irresistibleness and the knowledge that we must resist, that we must respect their separateness from ourselves—a separateness made all the more poignant by their complete dependence.

It is this feeling that I want to call the eros of parenthood: an upswelling of tenderness, often with a tinge of amazement, that expresses itself primarily through touch. In its intense physicality, it partakes of the love that also exists between grownup lovers—but it is different in some absolutely crucial ways. For healthy parental love is a sheltering, protective love that respects the radical inequality—in size, in power, in maturity—between parent and child. Though it sometimes flares into wild playfulness, its predominant rhythm is serene and relaxed, and it does not approach the driving, climactic movement of adult sexuality.

WE know that this love is natural—indeed, not only natural but necessary. Taking care of small children is hard work, exhausting and unceasing labor. The physical appeal of the young is one of the keys to their survival, and not just because it quickens parental energy. Loving touch, in and of itself, is necessary to the development of the healthy human child. Fifty years have passed since it was discovered that orphaned and abandoned infants would fail to thrive, even if they were kept clean and safe and well fed, when they were not held and caressed. In hospital intensive-care nurseries, I have sometimes seen signs that read "Please Touch Me!" attached to the clear-plastic boxes where premature infants lie. (These babies, their stick-like limbs surrounded by a welter of tubes and wires, don't easily elicit the desire to touch and hold.) The social biologist Ashley Montagu has written, "By being stroked, and caressed, and carried, and cuddled, and cooed to, by being loved, [the child] learns to stroke and caress and cuddle, and coo and to love others. In this sense love is sexual in the healthiest sense of that word. It implies involvement, concern, responsibility, tenderness, and awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of the other."

Yet as I write of these things I am aware of a strange unease that makes me

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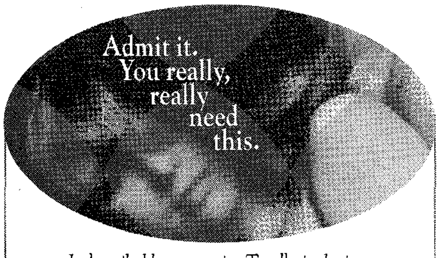

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feel I mustn't stray too far from words like "necessary" and "survival." It's as if a stern and frowning face were hovering over my shoulder. I feel this hint of censure when my daughter climbs into my bed in the morning to wake me, wrapping her muscley little arms around me. I feel it as I stand, at her command, outside the glass shower door and wait for the pink blur of her silhouette to turn into her perfect, dripping body. This unease makes it difficult to speak of the sheer pleasure that parents and children take in each other's bodies. It is difficult to admit, for example, that one finds the warm odor of one's sleeping child's skin delicious.

This feeling of unease does not come out of the blue. I have only to pick up the newspaper to realize just how suddenly this haunting presence in a family's life can materialize into brute reality. There are so many stories. Not long ago, a father in New Jersey was forced to leave his home for ten weeks because he had been barred from any contact with his child during that period. His crime? As part of an assignment for a photography class, and with the child's mother and nanny nearby, he had taken pictures of his naked six-year-old daughter. Even worse is the story of a young mother outside Syracuse whose two-year-old daughter was taken away from her after she naïvely confided to an uninformed stranger that she had become aroused while breast-feeding. She had called a community volunteer center to find out how to contact the local chapter of the La Leche League support group. Anyone at La Leche could have assured her that such feelings were utterly normal. Instead, the community volunteer center referred her to a rape crisis center, which in turn reported her to a child-abuse hotline. She was arrested and subjected to a five-hour police interrogation, and was separated from her daughter for an entire year. The most recent case concerns a thirty-one-year-old mother in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who is currently serving a thirty-day prison sentence after a jury convicted her of disorderly conduct and destruction of property in connection with a scuffle with police at a photo lab. The lab had called the police after developing pictures she had taken of her naked four-year-old son for a photography class at Harvard, and two officers confronted her when she went to pick up the pictures. Again, it turned out that the circumstances in which the photographs were taken, and the photographs themselves, were entirely innocent.

It is understandable that after decades of secrecy and denial concerning the sexual abuse of children, there should now be an almost belligerent attitude of caution. How prevalent such abuse may be is impossible to know, but each year there are at least thousands of children in this country who are subjected to some form of molestation, and we have had ample evidence that the consequences can be both profound and long-lasting. As we have absorbed this knowledge, it's as though our thick public hide had been replaced with an extraordinarily sensitive skin—a skin that shudders at the merest suggestion of inappropriate contact between adults and children. Keeping ourselves vigilant, bristling with suspicion, we seem to be doing penance for our past failures by obsessively searching for hints of trouble.

BUT it is possible that this thin, twitchy skin makes us insensitive in other ways. It is possible that in our zeal to atone and to protect we do another kind of damage—less spectacular but not insignificant. For what does it mean when the atmosphere becomes so thoroughly saturated with anxiety that it begins to intrude on the most intimate and loving moments between parent and child? A nurse-midwife I know reports that almost every day she hears from mothers and fathers who feel troubled, ashamed, or fearful about the physical closeness between themselves and their children. One woman, whose son had not been weaned until well after he became a toddler, worried that something was terribly wrong with their relationship when, the night before he was to begin kindergarten, he expressed a longing to nurse again. And recently a friend of mine exclaimed with exasperation, "I can't even take pleasure in rubbing lotion on my baby's sweet bottom without feeling that the vice squad is going to break down my door!" Surely, when parents begin to feel this way we are in danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

And was a metaphor ever so apt? For, if we are honest, we can acknowledge that in the pleasure of giving a baby a bath—in the slippery softness of warm, soapy skin, the exchange of glances, the coos, the giggles—we find ourselves at one end of a continuum of human sensation and emotion that reaches to the place inhabited by adult lovers.

One has only to look at the great painters who have taken mother-child love as their theme to see the visual celebration of this continuum. In the paintings of Raphael, of Rubens, of Mary Cassatt, one sees a mutual absorption, a complete relaxation, an absence of self-consciousness, a melding of one body with the other. All these are qualities that one might find in a scene of lovers, lying in a tangle of limbs, resting in the peaceful lassitude that follows love-making. Indeed, as Freud wrote, "No one who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a blissful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life."

But such comparisons have again become as shocking as they were when Freud first made them. To feel the erotically charged nature of the parent-child relationship—the thousand small intimacies that weave parent and child together—is to feel that one is breaking a taboo. Just last night, my daughter reminded me, as she often does, of our secret sign. In case anyone were ever to try and substitute a double in her place, I must look for the freckle that lies between the third and fourth fingers of her left hand. She shows me every little changing and unchanging mark on her body, and expects me to keep track—as a lover might.

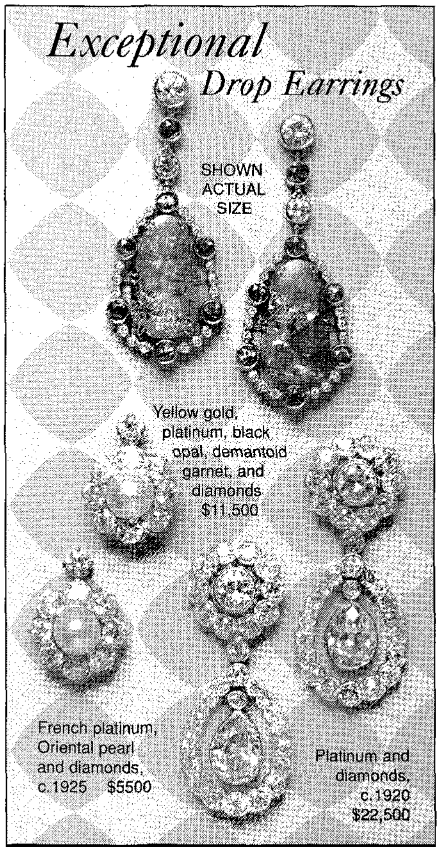
And there I feel the gaze again—the gaze that cannot see that two things can share similarities without being identical. For this mentality must have its boundaries in black-and-white; it cannot tolerate gradations or continuums. At the heart of it lies a sense of great moral fragility. Precisely because the soul is so likely to plummet to the abyss, it must be carefully protected by walls of prohibition.

Yet a climate of extremes is not the one that best protects our children. What else can we make of research that tells us that pedophiles tend to subscribe to strict and puritanical views about sex? That, within a family, a rigidly authoritarian structure and harshly conservative values are risk factors for sexual abuse? Or that sexual abuse is more likely to occur in families where there is an absence of physical affection? If we really look at the facts, it is hard to escape the conclusion that when the repertoire of touch is severely limited—so that touch is construed as always and only sexual—children are actually at greater risk.

Recently, a father told me, "My daughter is eleven, and I coach her soccer team. I'm an affectionate person, and I often have the impulse to reach out and tousle a child's hair or put my arm around her shoulder and encourage her. But I don't anymore." As he spoke, I thought of the other stories I've been hearing: about communities where child-care workers aren't allowed to hold children on their laps and where crossing guards are prohibited from so much as laying a hand on a child's shoulder.

I have known anorexic and bulimic women, and for them there was no trust in a natural sense of balance or limits. Living in a terrible prison of self-imposed prohibitions, they kept their refrigerators empty or alternated between binges and purges. For the women I know who have recovered, part of the process of healing was to rediscover the simple pleasure of eating, to let go of the all-or-nothing approach, and to remember such magic words as "This is good. I will have some. Now I have had enough." In a similar way, we could seek to regain a certain spontaneous delight in our children as we pat them dry or twirl them in the air or gaze at them asleep.

My daughter is nine years old now, and she is a prude, as I was at her age. She cannot bear to see French kissing in the movies, and recently she informed me that she plans to marry a crash-test dummy—"Because he won't do you-know-what." At the moment, her consuming passions are soccer, an ever-changing plan to build a clubhouse with her girlfriends, and an ongoing scheme to outwit a fourth-grade boy named Michael. I trust that, when the time is ripe and if she so desires, the foundation of physical love that she experienced as a small child will blossom into full-blown sexual love. What does worry me is the oppressive presence of that accusatory gaze, a gaze that wants us to believe that there is nothing in common between a blossom and the soil in which it grows. ♦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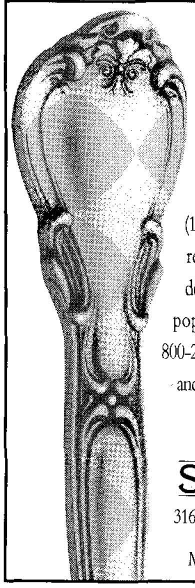
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LETTER FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

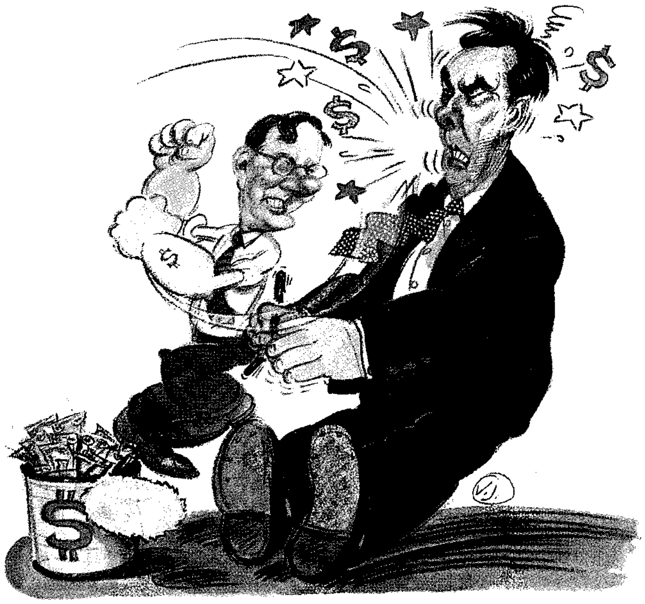
# BANANA REPUBLICAN

*The costliest primary campaign ever pits Steve Forbes and his flat tax against Bob Dole and his flat affect.*

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

MANCHESTER

As January slid into February, Bob Dole returned to New Hampshire to try to gnaw himself free from a trap. The trap's jagged teeth had lately been sharpened by the personal fortune of one of his rivals, but its spring had been set twenty years earlier, almost to the day, by the Supreme Court. On January 30, 1976, in a case called Buckley v. Valeo (the plaintiff was Senator James L. Buckley, of New York, a brother of William F. Buckley, Jr.), the Court ruled that, while it is perfectly consistent with the First Amendment for Congress to forbid you or me to give more than a thousand dollars to the political campaign of our choice, it's an impermissible violation of the sacred right of free speech to tell a rich man that he can't make as big a campaign contribution as he pleases—ten thousand dollars, ten million, a billion, whatever—as long as he makes the contribution to himself.


VICTOR JUHASZ

The Court thus added one more dollop of egregious lunacy to an electoral process that was not exactly a model of Cartesian rationalism to begin with. Four years ago, the principal excrescence of Buckley v. Valeo was Ross Perot, who at least had the courtesy to do his business out of doors, away from the antique rugs of the major parties. But Malcolm Stevenson Forbes, Jr., styled Steve, is nothing if not a Republican. By the end of last year, according to the latest filings at the Federal Election Commission, the Forbes for President campaign had spent some eighteen million dollars, all but a little of it Steve's; it has since been spending about a million a week. Most of the money has gone for television advertisements boosting Forbes and trashing his opponents. One result has been to turn local television into a political Home Shopping Network, where the principal item of costume jewelry on offer is the flat tax. Another has been to turn Forbes, the flat tax's champion, into the polling favorite in the New Hampshire primary—a position that until a week or two ago was held by Senator Bob Dole, of Kansas.

Forbes talks incessantly of restoring America's greatness, but the success of his campaign, however transitory it may prove to be, looks distressingly like a symptom of national decline. It is part of a pattern in which the United States is becoming more and more like a mid-level Latin republic. We have paramilitaries blowing up government buildings. We have a First Lady who considers herself a tribune of the poor and is in trouble with the law. We can buy lottery tickets on every corner, and gambling casinos dot the land. We have a huge and growing gap between rich and poor, with the rich protected by

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private security services and the poor isolated in sprawling slums where gunfire is common. And now we have a fabulously rich media mogul coming out of nowhere and announcing that he wants to be President of the Republic, like Berlusconi in Italy or Roberto Marinho, the boss of the Globo TV empire, in Brazil.

The Forbes campaign is a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde operation. The Mr. Hyde part is an electronic crime wave of negative TV advertising. Mr. Hyde's voice—a hired announcer's, actually—drips with venomous contempt: "Bob Dole. Washington values." The name of the capital city is wielded like a footpad's knife. "Phil Gramm. A Washington politician." And, for the first time in a Presidential-primary campaign, Mr. Hyde has made it a practice to savage candidates buried in single digits in the polls, in the hope of looting a point or two from the corpse: "Lamar Alexander. He won't change Washington. He'll fit right in." The "ad watch" columns of the leading newspapers agree that Forbes's negative ads have been unusually deceptive. A notorious example is the "bicycle path" spot, which slices up Dole for supposedly wanting to build a two-and-a-half-million-dollar-bicycle path in Miami. (The accompanying "visual"—sunshine, palm trees—is calculated to irritate freezing Granite Staters.) The bike path was in fact a tiny speck in a $14.3-billion omnibus Transportation Department appropriations bill, and Senate Republicans voted for it overwhelmingly. Of Forbes's main rivals—Dole, Senator Phil Gramm, of Texas, former Governor Lamar Alexander, of Tennessee, and Pat Buchanan, the commentator and former Nixon and Reagan aide—only Buchanan has been spared so far; his voters, mostly blue-collar xenophobes, are not Forbes's sort.

Dr. Jekyll, of course, is Forbes himself—awkward, earnest, myopic, polite, and utterly robotic in sticking to what he calls, many times a day, his "message of hope, growth, and opportunity." The contrast with Dole could hardly be more striking. A Dole speech is a little like an avant-garde jazz performance, in which the familiar chords serve as a jumping-off point for improvisatory, stream-of-consciousness riffs and dissonant asides. If Dole is Ornette Coleman, Forbes is Paul Whiteman. In the day and a half I spent trailing after him, I heard him give exactly—*exactly*—the same speech all four times he opened his mouth. To be sure, repetition is an essential element of stump oratory. But I have never heard any other politician, or any nonpolitician, stay so pitilessly "on message" as Forbes does. Even during question periods, Forbes is scarcely more variable than a telephone-answering machine—a sign not only of the candidate's discipline but also of the predictability of the questions, no matter whether reporters or ordinary citizens are doing the asking.

IN person, as Dr. Jekyll, Forbes is the candidate whose campaign is "about ideas"—or, rather, about one idea, the flat tax. The scheme is beguilingly simple: scrap the whole of the Internal Revenue Code, with its many brackets, deductions, and credits, and replace it with a seventeen-per-cent tax, after deductions. "Let me just quickly explain it," he told a group of Rotarians at the Nashua Country Club, a choice of venue that reflected either obliviousness or defiance. "Each individual gets a thirteen-thousand-dollar deduction—thirteen thousand dollars for each individual, tax-exempt income. Each child, five thousand dollars. So if you're a single person, your first thirteen thousand dollars of income is tax free of federal income tax. If you're a couple, it's thirteen times two—twenty-six thousand. If you have two kids, it's thirty-six thousand—twenty-six plus ten. That family today pays three thousand dollars; under the flat tax they would pay zero. Zip. Anything above those exemptions is taxed at a low, seventeen-per-cent rate." Well, not quite everything, just wages and salary—income that people work for, in other words. Under the Forbes plan, income that people don't work for—dividends, interest, pensions, inheritances, profits on the sale of gold or land (in the New Jersey horse country, for instance) or stock (in a magazine company, for instance)—is subject to the flattest tax of all: zero. Zip.

"Just remember that for you as individuals, for you as families, the flat tax is a tax cut," Forbes told the Rotarians. "You will gain more than you lose. You will pay less tax with the flat tax." Forbes purposely conflates the over-all size of the tax burden with the distribution of that burden—two quite separate propositions. His flat tax *is* a tax cut, but not because it's flat. It's a tax cut because Forbes sets the rate low enough so that the *relative* shift of the burden from the rich to the middle class (and, to a much lesser extent, from the

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poor to the middle class) doesn't translate into a politically awkward *absolute* tax hike for the middle class. That the relative shift occurs is undeniable; it's a simple matter of hydraulics. And, of course, the boon to the very rich from having investment income tax-free would be both relative and absolute, whatever the tax rate on work income.

The Forbes flat tax cum tax cut would yield a great deal less money than the current system does—somewhere between a hundred and fifty and two hundred billion dollars a year less, depending on who (apart from Forbes) is doing the estimating. Forbes offers three mutually incompatible arguments why this will not result in a concomitant increase in the budget deficit. First, the revenue numbers are phony, because they come from the Clinton Treasury Department. (Similar numbers, however, come from the conservative Tax Foundation, among others.) Second, in a Forbes Administration, spending will be cut sharply enough to make up the shortfall. (The new cuts, however, would have to be on top of the two hundred billion dollars a year to which the Republicans are already committed, and Forbes offers no clue about whose hide the new cuts would come out of.) Third—this is the "hope, growth, and opportunity" bit, though it has also been unkindly dubbed "déjà-voodoo economics"—the flat tax would unleash such frenzied economic activity that tax receipts would actually *increase*. (By this logic, the way to shrink Big Government would be to *raise* taxes, thereby forcing the bureaucrats to make do with less revenue.)

In trying to counter Forbes and his "message," the other Republican candidates have problems that go beyond his ability to outspend them. The rich enjoy a certain moral prestige in the Republican Party. Republican ideology glorifies private enterprise over public service. The successful business executive is the beau ideal. The public sector is treated with scorn; it is, after all, the preserve of politicians and bureaucrats. The targets of Republican populism are political and cultural élites; economic élites get a free pass, and the private economy is the object of something akin to worship.

At the Nashua Country Club, Forbes prefaced his remarks with what he called an "observation"—one he repeated in every speech I heard him give. "Contrary to what a lot of commentators would lead you to believe," he said, "the fact of the matter is that in America there really is no distinction between values and economics. They're truly one and the same." If this means anything, it means that a person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing actually knows the value of everything. And it carries James Carville's rough-and-ready motto for the 1992 Clinton campaign—"It's the economy, stupid"—into the realm of metaphysics.

Forbes's rivals are also hobbled by the fact that not a single one of them is prepared to defend the graduated income tax. They criticize Forbes's plan at the margins—for exempting investment income, for doing away with the home-mortgage deduction, for bagging the deduction for charitable contributions. ("It's kind of an insult, if you carry the logic through, that the only way the American people will give is if they're bribed by the tax code," Forbes told the Rotarians. Bribes bad, incentives good.) But no one speaks ill of the basic idea. Gramm, Buchanan, Alexander, and (with no apparent enthusiasm) Dole have endorsed the principle of a flat tax, while Richard Lugar, Alan Keyes, and Robert Dornan have said that they want to scrap the income tax altogether and replace it with a sales tax, which would be even more regressive. When I asked Buchanan at a press conference what he thought of progressive taxation, he said, good-naturedly but pointedly, "A steeply progressive graduated income tax is a feature of the 'Manifesto'—Karl Marx, 1848." None of Forbes's rivals are willing to defend the proposition that those who are ingenious, talented, hardworking, or just lucky enough to enjoy a disproportionate share of society's blessings should support society's duties in like measure. None are willing to say that extreme inequality of income is enough of a social evil that it ought not to be exacerbated by the tax code, let alone that the tax code might legitimately be used to reduce it. Come autumn, however, President Clinton will have no such inhibitions. It is easy to imagine him, in a debate with Forbes, doing to the flat tax what Forbes says he wants to do to the I.R.S.: "Kill it, drive a stake through its heart, bury it, and hope it never rises again to terrorize the American people."

SELDOM has Walter Mittyism achieved such dizzy heights as it has with the Forbes campaign. If a rich man, even one of better than average athletic abilities, dreams of being a professional baseball player, it doesn't matter how much money he has: he can't just saunter into Shea Stadium and play shortstop for the Mets. If he can pick out a tune on the piano, he still can't just march up on the Lincoln Center stage and trade licks with Wynton Marsalis. But if he fancies himself Presidential timber, it seems, he can buy a few million dollars' worth of airtime, get on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, shoot to the top of the polls, and threaten the legitimate ambitions of a serious man like Bob Dole.

But Forbes and Forbes's money were not the only problems bedevilling Bob Dole when the Kansas Senator returned to New Hampshire. The usual congeries of commentators, pollsters, focus-group conveners, pols, and consultants—the kangaroo court of public opinion—had condemned his televised response to President Clinton's State of the Union address as a failure. This had not made Dole happy, and he returned to the subject at each of his appearances. At one, in a remark much quoted afterward, he said glumly, "I gave a fireside chat the other night and the fire went out." A perfunctory attack on the liberal media followed, but it was pretty well obscured by laughter, the most appreciative of which was from the press corps.

Reporters like Dole. They like him because, on the whole, they share with him an empirical view of the world, an antipathy to ideology, and an aversion to sanctimony, and they love—the word is not too strong—his sense of humor, which is expressed in bleak, uninflected asides ("the fire went out"). It's not that Dole is seen as incapable of hypocrisy; on the contrary, a suspicion that he does not believe some of the things he says—about abortion, for instance—is one of the sources of the press's liking for him. The jokes telegraph an awareness of cant, his own and others', and an ironic distance from it. So Dole's attacks on the liberal media were received with equanimity by those among its representatives who were accompanying him. They—we—figured he didn't really mean it. As Dole must know, the verdict on his State of the Union response had little or nothing to do with liberalism and a great deal to do with the mindless process of groupthink by which an opinion (the tentative first impression, far from universally shared, that Dole's speech was not particularly good) gets hardened, through steadily less qualified repetition, until it acquires the ontological status of a fact (Dole's speech was a disaster, period). Dole knows the rules, and he knows they have to be lived by, in the press gallery as surely as on the Senate floor. If Dole, for his sins, comes back as a journalist in his next life, he'll be a wire-service guy, filing a dozen times a day in one-sentence paragraphs, scorning thumbsuckers and op-ed-page philosophers. Forbes, on the other hand, will come back as—well, as an editorial writer for *Forbes*.

Forbes's sudden strength in the polls has been widely, and no doubt rightly, interpreted as a sign of Dole's weakness. Yet Dole remains arguably the only candidate who—barring a Clinton flameout over Whitewater—has a strong chance of winning the general election, because Dole is the only candidate who could probably succeed in recruiting Colin Powell to run for Vice-President. It is impossible to imagine Powell on a ticket with Forbes, or with Buchanan, or even with Alexander: the difference in stature would be too embarrassing, too injurious to the dignity of all concerned. But Dole—a generation older than Powell and a veteran not only of thirty-five years on Capitol Hill but also of the biggest, deadliest war of all—is a substantial enough figure to be comfortable with Powell as his partner, and to make him comfortable in turn. And the two are ideologically and temperamentally compatible: the General, like the Senator, is an undoctrinaire conservative. A Dole-Powell ticket would be powerfully attractive to the center, to independents, even to many liberals. And who is to say that millions of blacks, whatever their affinity with Clinton, could in the end find it in their hearts to vote against the first African-American ever to have a realistic shot at nationwide elected office? Game, set, and match.

First, though, Dole has to win the nomination. He has stumbled but not fallen, and it is hard to believe that his party would be so foolish as to turn itself over to a tyro whose single issue is the further enrichment of his fellow-millionaires. As the losers—beginning with Gramm—drop out, they and their supporters are likely to drift back to their old comrade and leader. Forbes has the money, but Dole, still, has the time. ♦

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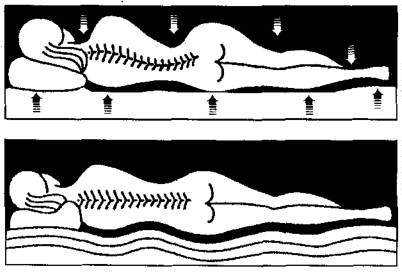

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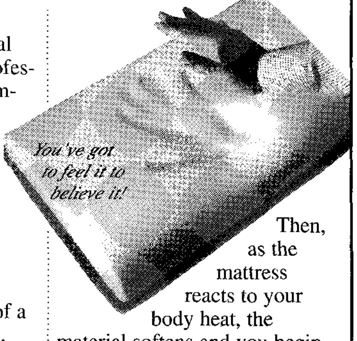

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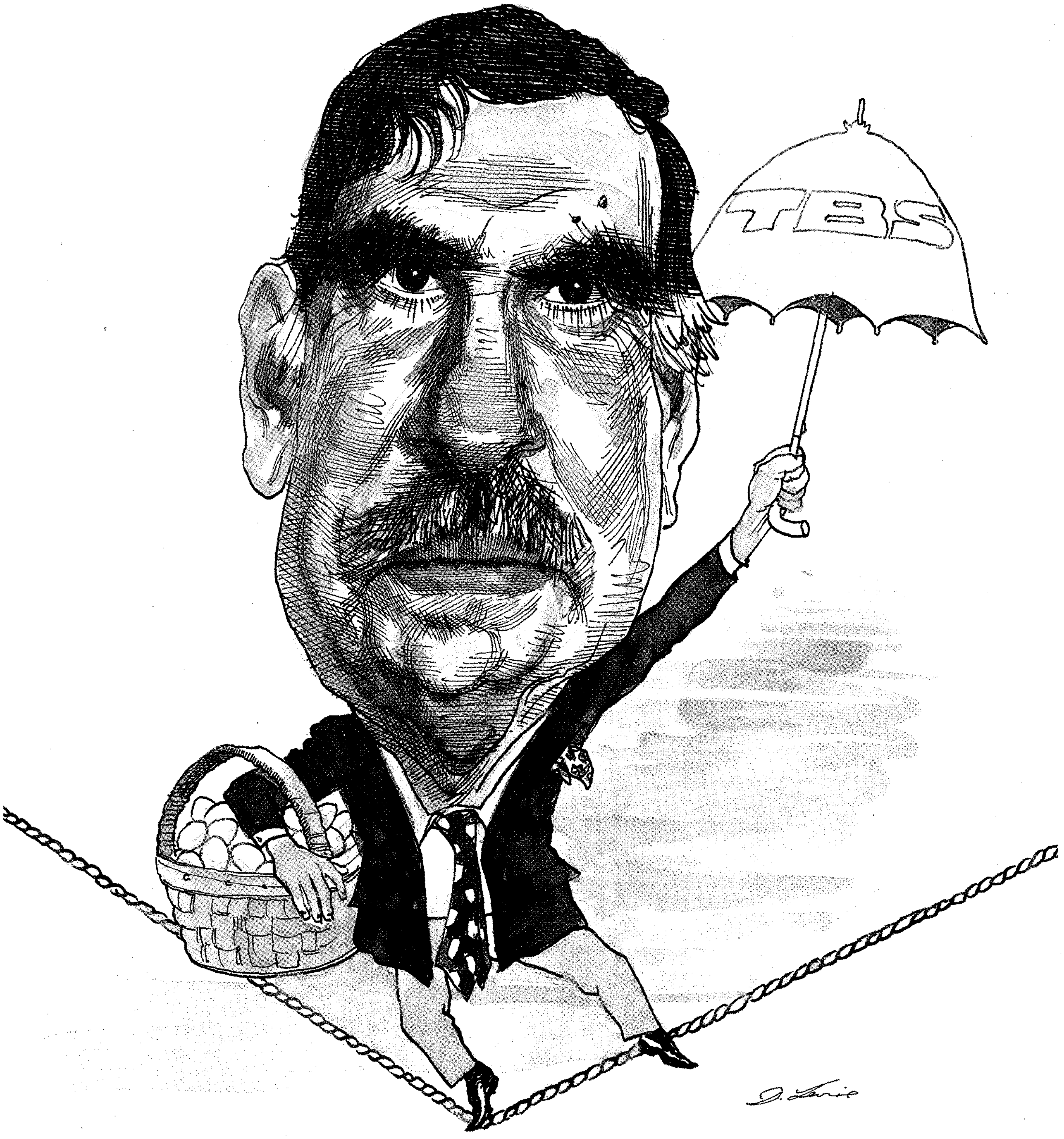


*Levin risked everything to put Time Warner back on top and quell the incipient rebellion against him.*

## THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

# JERRY'S DEAL

*Why does Time Warner's Gerald Levin think he can appease Ted Turner, John Malone, Michael Milken, and the Federal Trade Commission and still come out the winner in the Turner deal? Twenty years ago, Levin had a very big idea. Last summer, he desperately needed another one.*

### BY CONNIE BRUCK

EARLY last August, just a few days after Disney announced its merger with Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., which would snatch from Time Warner its ranking as the world's largest media-entertainment company, Gerald Levin, Time Warner's beleaguered chairman and C.E.O., and its president, Richard Parsons, were having dinner together. As Parsons later told me, Levin said he had just come to the realization of "what would really transform this company"; namely, that instead of *selling* its stake in the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS)—something Levin had been trying hard to do, as part of an effort to reduce Time Warner's crippling debt obligation of more than twenty billion dollars—he should be *buying* the whole enterprise. It was a startling turnaround. But Parsons, who had been brought in by Levin from outside the company a year earlier, accepted his C.E.O.'s statement with equanimity, and even enthusiasm, telling Levin that if he believed in it that strongly he should "go for it."

"There was no investment banker whispering in his ear," Parsons said, to emphasize his point. "Jerry went off to the mountaintop, so to speak, and came back with this thought on his own."

This impression that Levin conveys, of having been vouchsafed a revelation during solitary meditations, was noted by his colleagues years ago, when he occupied a far lowlier place in the corporate hierarchy—as "company strategist" at the old Time Inc. Now that he has risen to the apex at Time Warner, his almost oracular quality seems to have grown even more marked. Combining this reflective, enigmatic mien with an unusual manner of expression—he may refer to business transactions or entities as "sublime," "transforming," "an unfinished symphony"—Levin has struck a distinctive note in the upper echelons of American business.

DAVID LEVINE

He has, moreover, declared repeatedly over the years that it is a difference not only of style but of substance. For, while his peers have been unabashedly striving to scale the corporate ladder to attain the personal perquisites of power and wealth, Levin has long maintained that he has been compelled by something far less mundane, almost mystical: a sense of obligation to divine and bring to fruition the "manifest destiny" of Time Inc. and, now, Time Warner. When Nicholas Nicholas was chosen instead of Levin for the presidency of Time Inc., back in 1986, many of Levin's colleagues were surprised that he opted to remain at the company; one of them recalls that in explaining his decision he had characteristically invoked this sense of higher duty, saying, "First, I'm going to find what is right for this company—and, once I have, I'll know my work is done, and then I will go."

But there is an odd disjunction about Levin, for, while declaring repeatedly that he is driven by his mission and will happily forgo his job if his performance proves wanting, he has—in his assumption of power over the last five years—made moves worthy of the most ruthless corporate infighter, seemingly designed to bolster his position, and now to preserve his job, at any cost. It is probably this disjunction that confounds so many of Levin's colleagues: they tend to accept his presentation of himself as "an intellectual and a spiritual thinker," to quote the columnist Liz Smith, but they comment, in what has become a perpetual refrain, that they do not understand him.

Whatever Levin's motivation, his quest has become increasingly quixotic. In the three years since Steve Ross, the founder of Warner Communications, Inc., died and Levin stepped into his place as chairman and C.E.O. of Time Warner, what seemed predictable about that substitution has come to pass: Ross, for all his flaws, was a charismatic, larger-than-life figure; Levin, for all his intelligence, is not; and the company, while its various parts remain strong, has consequently suffered from a great absence at its core.

With the Turner deal, Levin seems determined to try to change all that—to come into his own and, in so doing, to emerge finally from Ross's shadow. As though wanting, even, to erase the last three years, Levin has stated repeatedly that the Turner deal is "a clean break with the past," "a new beginning for Time Warner"—an interpretation that seems strained, at best. (It is certainly not a new beginning for Time Warner's existing shareholders.) What the deal has been thus far, however, is a real crucible for Levin: under enormous pressure, sorely tested, his strengths and weaknesses have been brought to the fore and made manifest. Levin has also referred to the Turner deal as "Time Warner's defining moment"—something that remains to be seen, inasmuch as the deal, for all its fanfare, may never be consummated. But it has plainly been his.

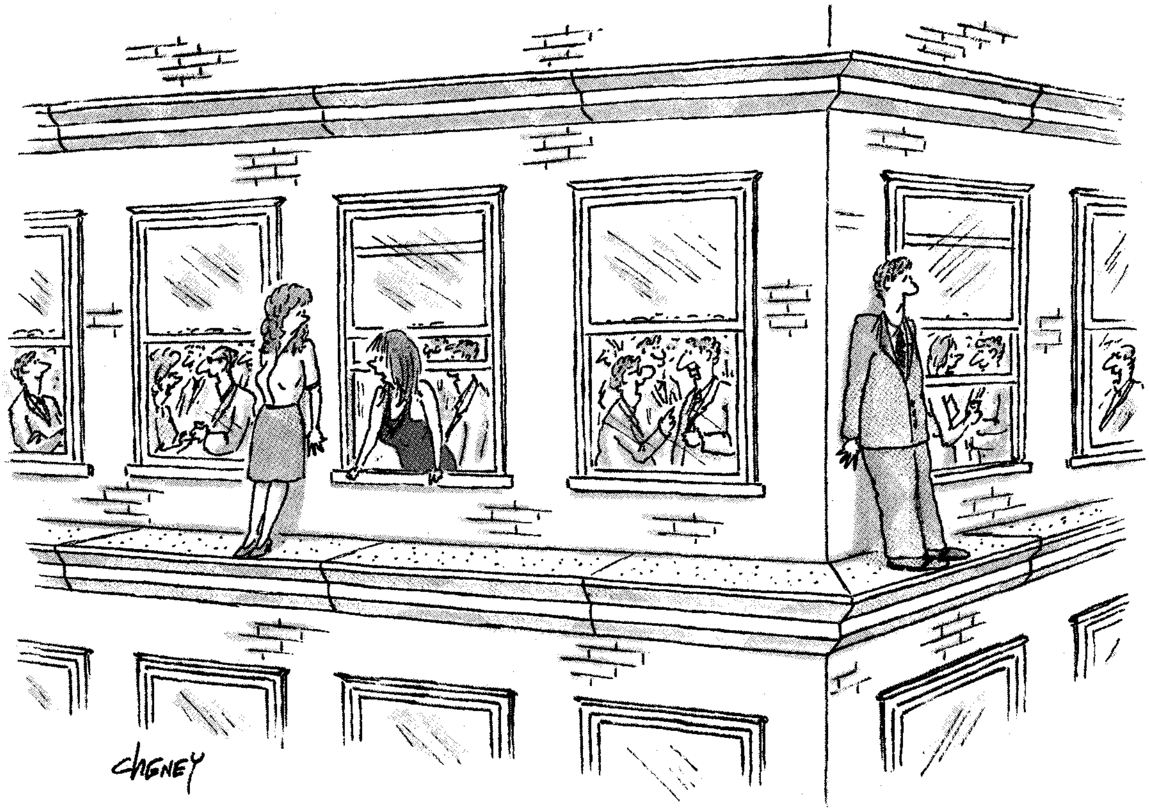
LEVIN did not at first seem destined for the world of business. At Haverford, a small Quaker college in Pennsylvania, he majored in Biblical studies. Born in Philadelphia in 1939, he was brought up as a religious Jew, but by the time he arrived at Haverford he considered the Judaic philosophy too parochial and confining; he became imbued instead with the lessons of the New Testament, and strove to apply them to his life, by cultivating humility and denying ego. After studying law at the University of Pennsylvania, he began working for a large law firm. But a commitment to public service—a point he has always stressed—prompted him to enter the business world, and he took a job at the Development & Resources Corporation, where he was an assistant to David Lilienthal, the former head of the Tennessee Valley Authority. In 1972, he joined Time Inc., and there, four years later, he had his great triumph. In 1976, he persuaded the company's then chairman and C.E.O., Andrew Heiskell, to lease satellite time to transmit HBO's signal to cable systems—a practice that soon revolutionized the cable industry. Heiskell bestowed upon Levin the moniker by which he became known at Time Inc.—"resident genius."

Such accomplishments so early in life can, of course, set the bar very high; Levin appears to have been trying to match that performance, and re-earn that title, ever since. In subsequent years at Time, however, it eluded him. He was associated with a subscription-television venture that failed (it was said to have caused a hundred-million-dollar loss) and with an experimental teletext-information service that also did badly (this one was said to have caused an additional twenty-five-to-thirty-million-dollar loss). He also made a deal to form TriStar Pictures, with CBS and Columbia Pictures as HBO's partners; it stipulated that HBO would provide capital for a percentage of the cost of all Columbia films, and placed no cap on the amount of money HBO might have to invest. Francis (Fay) Vincent, Jr., who was then the C.E.O. of Columbia Pictures and is now a Time Warner director and a friend of Levin's, told me when I asked him about this deal a couple of years ago, "We revised it. We had to. It was an open-ended lien on Time's treasury." These efforts did not help Levin's prospects: his career stagnated, and for a while it seemed that he would never recapture his early prominence.

But in 1989 Levin emerged as the principal architect of the Time-Warner merger, and he was named vice-chairman of the new entity, which positioned him for his ultimate leap to the top. Levin at the time referred to that deal, too, as a "transforming transaction"—and it did have a wondrous effect on his career and income. However, there has been no alchemy for Time Inc. shareholders. Even as the Time-Warner merger was being negotiated, they were denied the chance to act on a rival bid of two hundred dollars a share from Paramount Communications; then they paid a princely price (negotiated primarily by Levin) to acquire Warner Communications, Inc. Yet over the last six years, while the Dow Jones average has risen fifty per cent, Time Warner's share price has lagged significantly behind those of its media-company peers, and is about fifteen per cent under what Paramount offered.

In February of 1995, Levin told irate Time Warner shareholders that he was going to do a number of things that should lift the dormant stock price. In an effort to reduce the gargantuan debt load, he would sell assets, including the Turner stake. He would also restructure Time Warner Entertainment (T.W.E.)—a limited partnership holding the Warner Bros. movie studio, HBO, and Time Warner's cable systems. Ross's brainchild, T.W.E. had been formed in 1992, with Levin's ardent support, as a way of raising badly needed capital; equity in it was sold to the Japanese companies Toshiba and Itochu and, later (through Levin's efforts), to U S West. (This magazine's owners, the Newhouse family, are involved in a separate cable partnership with T.W.E.) Nicholas Nicholas, who had become, with Ross, the co-C.E.O. of Time Warner, fought bitterly against forming T.W.E., arguing that the company was selling off its crown jewels and should instead raise capital by selling nonstrategic cable assets. For this truculence, in large measure, Nicholas was fired (with the critical assistance of Levin, who then took Nicholas's place as co-C.E.O.). By the beginning of last year, though, Levin himself had reversed course, and told shareholders that he would return Warner Bros. and HBO to the parent company and move the cable carriers into a separate, self-financing entity—one that would conveniently take upon itself roughly half of Time Warner's existing debt.

Popular as Levin's February promises were with Time Warner's major institutional shareholders, by July he was finding



"There's someone I'd like you to meet."

## VOLUPTAS

Strange to be remembering how—
was it twenty-odd years ago?—
you drew back from one of our kisses,
your head turning half away so that
I saw in our bedroom's half-light
your lovely profile and eye staring
out toward and into a passing thought.
Then all of half your smile was for me,
and you put your mouth to mine again
with overwhelmed gentleness.
We both were overwhelmed and pulled under.

Strange suddenly to remember this
after so many, many kisses,
after such years of rupturing.
Caught in our archaic caresses
(you know, that same old, old thing):
a space of five seconds of fresh time,
when nothing was happening
and nothing was happening yet.
And I now its voluptuary.

—Irving Feldman

them difficult—and expensive—to keep. The T.W.E. restructuring was proving both exorbitantly expensive and extremely complicated. Toshiba and Itochu were driving a hard financial bargain to unwind the partnership ("They know that we are in the driver's seat," Jay Chai, the chairman and C.E.O. of Itochu International, was quoted as saying of Time Warner last spring), and U S West was balking: its executives took the position that they were happy with the partnership as it stood, but if it *were* to be unwound they would want full control of the cable entity, not a fifty-fifty structure, which was what Time Warner was proposing. And although Time Warner's investment bankers had been working hard to find a buyer for the Turner stake, they had not yet succeeded.

While Levin had failed to achieve any major asset sales, he had made further acquisitions, incurring three to four billion dollars in additional debt. Ever the cable evangelist, he had resolutely continued his strategy of investing in the cable industry, though the prevailing view in the media industry was that the capital-intensive and highly competitive distribution businesses, including cable, were very risky. New technologies are rapidly transforming the communications landscape, and many observers believe that the sure winners will be the content businesses—companies that fulfill the demand for programming which these new technologies create. Levin, however, is proud of his iconoclasm; he has sometimes reminded a friend that when he pushed for satellite transmission in 1976 there were many skeptics, too. Even some of Levin's critics say that he has done a good job of enhancing the already well-positioned metropolitan-area cable clusters of Time Warner, and this achievement will benefit the company if his telecommunications strategy succeeds. "But that's a ten-year strategy," one of them adds, "and he doesn't *have* ten years."

By midsummer, Levin's luxurious offices in the Time Warner Building must have had an increasingly bunkerlike atmosphere. And the hostile forces were gathering not only without but within. During the last year, the Warner Music Group, the company's star division, had been beset with the kind of turmoil that would have been unthinkable when Ross was alive. It had culminated in Levin's asking Michael Fuchs, the chairman of HBO, to take over the music division. Fuchs's ascension had infuriated Robert Daly and Terry Semel, the partners who have run the Warner Bros. studio together for many years. Semel was known to be considering moving to M.C.A., and Daly, too, is said by several friends to have been talking about quitting—or perhaps taking Levin's job.

Moreover, Gordon Crawford, the powerful senior vice-president of the Los Angeles-based Capital Research Company, which controls nine per cent of Time Warner's stock—the company's second-largest bloc—was finally losing patience. Crawford is "the high priest of media investing," one of his colleagues joked at a recent investment conference. And, while Crawford's funds were major stockholders in Time Inc. before the Time-Warner merger, and Crawford has had a cordial relationship with Levin, at Warner Communications (where in 1972 his funds became the company's largest investor) he had been family, and has been close to Daly and Semel for years. Crawford told me that—particularly after the turmoil in the music division—he would have considered it "catastrophic" if Daly and Semel had left the studio. And he evidently would have supported any move Daly made to unseat Levin.

Crawford's disaffection was matched by that of Levin's largest stockholder, Seagram, which has a 14.9-per-cent stake in the company, and whose C.E.O., Edgar Bronfman, Jr., is known to be contemptuous of Levin's performance. Levin refused to give Bronfman two board seats at Time Warner that he requested. However, had Crawford thrown his weight behind Bronfman's request (and he might well have been joined by other institutional investors), the Time Warner board would almost certainly have had to acquiesce.

These were the forces closing in on Levin when, on July 31st, Michael Eisner, the chairman of Disney, announced the nineteen-billion-dollar acquisition of Capital Cities/ABC—a move that was greeted with lavish praise by Wall Street. Levin, who is chary about giving his own real views but gathers information with a collector's avidity, is said to have called a number of his colleagues in the media business.

" 'What do you think?' " one of them recalls his asking. "'Is this seismic?'" This person continued, "I think it mattered to Jerry that Disney would now be the biggest."

WITHIN days, Levin had conceived his response: a bold move that would regain for Time Warner its title as the biggest media-entertainment company. If he could negotiate a deal on reasonable terms, it might also silence his critics and quell the incipient rebellion both inside and outside the company. The union of Time Warner and Turner *was* compelling in the abstract: a happy enhancement of both content and distribution, from which both companies should benefit.

The issue, however, was not the logic of the combination. Rather, it was whether Time Warner, in its financially stressed state, should be making such a sizable acquisition, and on what terms. And, even if the transaction could be justified financially, one might question whether Levin, who had been unable to wring any substantial benefits from the merger of Time and Warner Communications, with their diverse cultures, would be able to manage effectively an entity that was bigger still.

For Levin, apparently, the concept was all powerful, and he threw himself into the pursuit of Turner as though it would be his salvation. Parsons and others on the Time Warner side emphasize that it was "Jerry's deal" from start to finish, and that seems indisputable: he was its progenitor, its driving force, and, for Time Warner, its chief negotiator.

He didn't have the kind of seasoned financial advisers who have until recently been present at Time Warner. He was assisted by Parsons, a well-regarded lawyer and a former chairman of the Dime Savings Bank but a newcomer to the media business, and by Richard Bressler, a thirty-eight-year-old junior member of the company's financial staff whom Levin promoted a year ago to the post of Time Warner's chief financial officer, after forcing Bert Wasserman, who had been Ross's C.F.O. at Warner for many years, to resign. Wasserman had an intimate knowledge of the company's finances, but he was strong-minded and is said to have argued against Levin's financial decisions on more than one occasion.

This was also the first major transaction Levin had attempted since becoming C.E.O. of Time Warner without relying on Oded (Ed) Aboodi. Aboodi, an ingenious financial adviser, had been Ross's éminence grise, handling his personal finances, helping to structure and negotiate his deals, and communicating with him in a kind of abstruse numerical patois that only those two understood. His role at the old Warner and then at Time Warner made a mockery of corporate governance, for although he was involved in every significant financial transaction and exercised greater influence than the C.F.O., he was not an executive, and so was free of corporate accountability. Aboodi was, in a sense, the personification of the freewheeling Warner culture, so antithetical to Time Inc.'s straitlaced one; and anyone would have thought Levin and Aboodi unlikely partners.

But after the Time-Warner merger, which Levin, Time's chief negotiator, had negotiated with Aboodi (it was suggested by the Delaware court that ruled on the merger that Levin had been badly outnegotiated), Levin cleaved to him. Aboodi became his guide through the maze of the Warner culture, and his co-conspirator in the firing of Nicholas. When Levin, as chairman and C.E.O., grew more remote and insular than he had been in the past, Aboodi became not only his financial adviser and dealmaker but also his key confidant at the company. In 1994, however, Aboodi (without admitting any wrongdoing) paid almost a million dollars to settle charges of insider trading. And, perhaps in part because of that, last summer he joined the ever-lengthening list of people whom Levin had fired outright or had eased out.

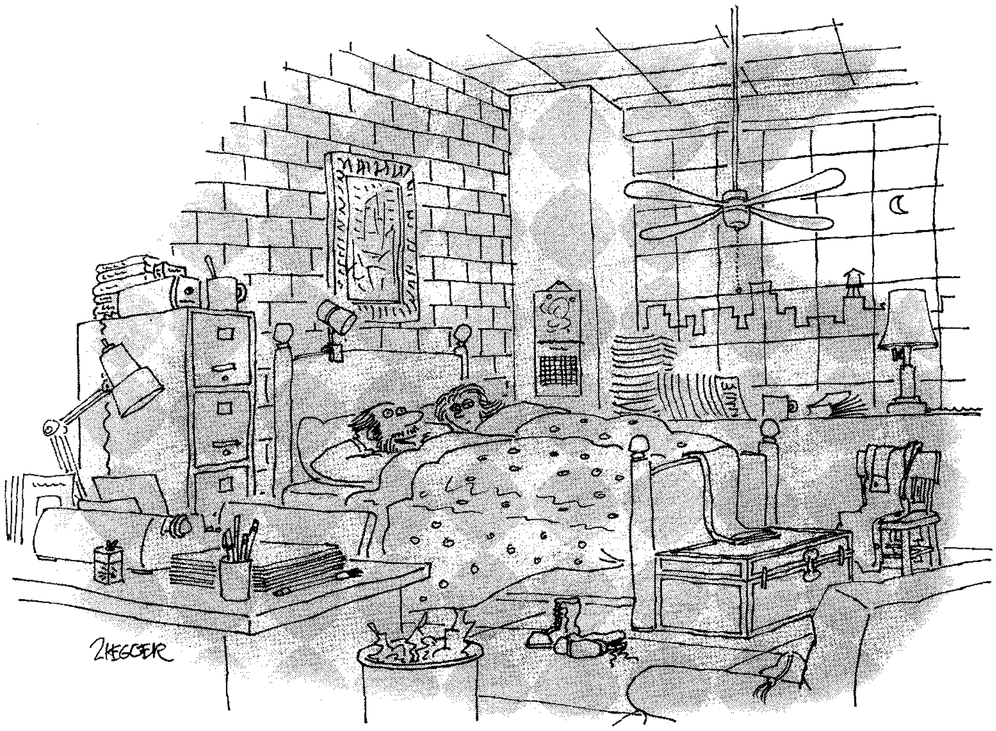
Thus, in approaching the Turner deal Levin was working for the first time not with in-house troops he had inherited but with his own, handpicked ones: Parsons and Bressler. Bressler did the financial preparation, in the two weeks or so before Levin made his proposal to Turner. Levin is said to have been an anxious, albeit committed, suitor during those days. After all, why would Ted Turner—the creator of CNN, a notoriously free-spirited entrepreneur, and in some circles a kind of folk hero—surrender his autonomy to become part of a Time Warner–Turner behemoth?

Moreover, relations between Levin and Turner had not been good. Turner, who had been financed by the junk-bond impresario Michael Milken in the eighties and became overextended in 1987, had been bailed out by a consortium of Tele-Communications, Inc. (T.C.I.), the country's largest cable operator, controlled by John Malone; Time Inc.; and some other cable companies. In return, Time and T.C.I. each acquired roughly twenty per cent of Turner stock and a right of approval on any major expenditures by Turner. In the last couple of years, while Malone had frequently been supportive, Levin had repeatedly blocked Turner's initiatives, leading Turner to lash out at Levin in a now famous speech at the National Press Club in the fall of 1994, in which he likened Time Warner's treatment of him to ritual clitoridectomy.

Because of the Time Warner-T.C.I.-TBS interconnection, Levin, in his designs on Turner, would have to enlist the coöperation of Malone, as well. But Levin decided to court Turner first. He invited himself and his wife, Barbara, to lunch at Turner's Montana ranch on Saturday, August 19th. Also at the ranch that day was Gordon Crawford, a good friend of Turner's. (Crawford, who as Capital Research's senior executive controls a great deal of stock not only in Time Warner but also in Turner, claims that he was there by coincidence—that Levin had not apprised him of his proposal. In any case, he became one of the strongest supporters of the deal.) Jane Fonda met the Levins when they arrived at the airport, and, given the relationship between Levin and Turner at the time, her greeting was not surprising. "My husband's in a good mood," she is said to have told Levin. "I hope you're not going to put him in a bad one."

Turner has been longing for a broadcast network for some time (he once jokingly told reporters that he sometimes wakes in the night shouting, "I haven't got a network!"), and his latest hopes were pinned on CBS. By the time Levin arrived, hat in hand, CBS had announced its troth to Westinghouse; but Turner, who had been working with Milken to raise financing, was considering increasing that bid. He and Fonda may well have suspected that Levin, armed with Time Warner's blocking power, intended to quash such a bid.

What Levin had actually come to say



*"I had a wonderful dream that Anonymous turned out to be me."*

• •

apparently made Turner's good mood even better. Friends of Turner's say that, while Milken had succeeded in raising the financing needed for a CBS bid, Turner realized that he would have to pay such a high price to outbid Westinghouse that it would take him years to work his way out from under his debt. And the Disney transaction had apparently had some impact on Turner, too, for he would later say, "I want to see what it's like to be *big* for a while."

Moreover, Levin had come with a proposal that was as sweet as he could possibly make it. Less than a year earlier, he is said to have had the view that Turner's prospects were weakening, and that if Time Warner could get thirty dollars a share it should definitely sell. But, under the terms of the deal he was now proposing, Time Warner would pay roughly thirty-five dollars a share; Turner himself would stand to gain a value of approximately two billion dollars. Time Warner, because of its debt load, would make this acquisition not with cash but with stock—issuing new shares for the eighty-two per cent of Turner it did not already own. It was a very high price. Some analysts—particularly those employed by investment banks covetous of Time Warner's business—defended it, but David Londoner, of Schroder Wertheim, who has been for many years one of the most respected analysts of media and entertainment stocks in the business, considered the price so excessive, and so dilutive to Time Warner's current shareholders, that he wrote in a memorandum when news of the deal broke that if he had not read it in the New York *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* he would not have believed it was true. (Levin is said to have called Londoner after reading the memo and threatened never to speak to him again.)

If Turner were to accept Levin's proposal, he would become Time Warner's largest stockholder, with roughly ten per cent of its shares, and he would also control two board seats. His title would be vice-chairman, and, Levin promised, he would still have control of his assets. Levin is also said to have emphasized that CNN, its journalistic integrity intact, would be safe within the institution of Time Inc.; Turner, friends say, has been intent on keeping it out of the hands of the right-wing Rupert Murdoch.

Levin later told several people—as though he were conveying portentous information, one recalled—that Jane Fonda was "*very* helpful." According to one of Levin's associates, "Jane said, '*Look.* Now you've got two bosses' "—Levin and Malone—" 'so you can't go left or right. And here you're not really selling but merging. You can work with Jerry.' She helped Ted to see that it could be salutary, and, according to Jerry, Ted went for it like a fish to water."

This person added, "Malone was a much tougher bear to wrestle with." For many years, Malone has been the most brazen denizen of the tough, monopolistic cable-industry world. He is notorious for driving bruising bargains, and for reopening negotiations after deals have been struck, in order to extract the last possible shred of benefit. And that is in deals that Malone has been *eager* to make. Here, by contrast, he was brought reluctantly to the negotiating table. For, as Peter Barton, who is the C.E.O. of Liberty Media Corporation, the wholly owned programming arm of T.C.I., told me emphatically, he and Malone prized their Turner stake and wanted to increase their ownership, not give it up. They had taken Levin at his word when he said, back in February of 1995, that he wanted to sell Time Warner's stake, and Barton had been raising the money to buy it when he received the excited call from Turner's people, on August 19th. "We got the bum's rush," Barton said repeatedly, alluding to the fact that Levin had been brewing this transaction for a couple of weeks before proposing it to Turner but had not apprised T.C.I., Time Warner's partner in Turner, until that very weekend. If Malone felt he'd been taken advantage of, however, he would soon remedy that.

The three-way deal was negotiated in meetings in late August and early September between Levin, Turner, and Malone. Only one other adviser was present—Michael Milken. He had provided the critical financing not only to Turner but also to Malone in the early days when each was building his company. "Milken had the confidence of the three principals—Ted, John, and Jerry, too," Richard Parsons, the Time Warner president, said. Regarding that grouping, however, another person involved in the deal commented, "Jerry must have a very high opinion of himself

COURTESY OF GIVENCHY

to think he could negotiate with those assembled masses."

In this negotiation, Malone did not depart from tradition. One person who worked on the deal told me, "With Malone, it is pure, unadulterated, distilled reason, and it all runs in one direction"—his economic interest. "Then his guys have to outdo the boss, to show that they're worth it—but he's *already* taken everything off the table. Yet they come in, saying, 'We've talked to John, we need *more.*' " After the negotiations had been going on for a couple of weeks, Malone reached a point of professed intransigence, and Levin flew to Denver to try to resuscitate the transaction. Of this effort by Levin, Parsons said, "It was Jerry who was the force that kept this deal alive—he would not let it fall apart."

The major sticking point for Malone was his desire to be free to acquire more Time Warner stock beyond the level of roughly nine per cent which T.C.I. would receive in exchange for its shares in Turner. Levin's associates had been cautioning Levin that Malone was not to be trusted ("Malone wants to control the world, as we all know," one commented), and that safeguards should be put in place to prevent his gaining a controlling position in Time Warner. Malone's insistence on being able to acquire more stock seemed a reasonable clue to his intentions. "But Malone explained that it was not about influence or control, it was economic," one person involved in the deal told me. Malone had said that his Turner stake was effectively a hedge: he was equally invested in both programming and cable services. If he were to give up his Turner stake in favor of this new configuration, he said, he wanted to be similarly hedged, and so would need to own a larger stake in Time Warner.

## A LIFE IN FASHION

*In 1952, Hubert de Givenchy opened his own fashion house, on the Rue Alfred de Vigny, where, almost immediately, he was fitting the Vicomtesse de Noailles, the Rothschild women, and, most famously, Sabrina herself: Audrey Hepburn. The very tall, very reserved Givenchy, who has just retired, and who this week is being given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Council of Fashion Designers of America, is known for the distinctive harmony and elegance of his creations. The imprint of his old friend Balenciaga, however, has never quite left him. "Attending one of Balenciaga's fittings was like seeing a miracle performed," Givenchy has said. "One had the impression that the dresses were untouched by human hand."*

When I repeated this explanation to a friend of Malone's, the friend grinned and said, "Right. That's what John *would* say." In any event, Levin agreed that Malone could have the right of first refusal on Turner's stock if Turner should decide to sell. Time Warner's poison pill, which was put in place after Seagram accumulated its holding, effectively bars an investor from owning more than fifteen per cent of the company's outstanding shares, but Malone bargained for terms that are highly unusual. They are based not on outstanding shares but on fully diluted shares, including options, warrants, and convertible securities. Thus he gained the right to acquire not fifteen but approximately eighteen and a half per cent of Time Warner's stock.

There was, however, a regulatory problem. This deal would tie Malone's T.C.I., the country's largest cable operator, to Time Warner, its second-largest; together, they would control between forty and fifty per cent of all cable subscribers in the country. But a Federal Communications Commission regulation prevents a single company from controlling more than thirty per cent of all cable subscribers, and if T.C.I. held more than a five-per-cent voting stake in Time Warner the F.C.C. would treat them as a single company.

Therefore, Malone and Levin agreed that Malone's stock would be placed in a voting trust—to be voted by Levin. This, too, is extraordinary; typically, a bank acts as trustee, or perhaps several independent directors do. It was suggested to Levin that the arrangement would never pass muster with the F.C.C., so he should, at the very least, share the voting power with a couple of independent Time Warner directors. But Levin—for whom a nine-per-cent bloc meant that in some future confrontation he would not be utterly naked—did not want that, and Malone is said not to have wanted it, either. It was, after all, Levin who would be motivated

"I exiled the lot of them. How are your kids?"

to keep Malone satisfied, lest Malone manage—through a complex range of scenarios—to extricate his stock from the trust and ally it with the stock held by Turner, Crawford, and Bronfman, thus forming a controlling bloc.

When the voting-trust arrangement was criticized, Levin is said to have become quite vehement, comparing the situation to one that occurred in the Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., merger, in 1985, when the redoubtable Warren Buffett gave his voting proxy to Thomas Murphy, the C.E.O. of Capital Cities/ABC. But, as one person involved in this transaction pointed out, "Buffett's a long-term investor, whereas Malone's a shark—and Murphy had built Cap Cities, whereas Jerry has been heading Time Warner for only three years, and not doing a good job of it."

While Levin's concessions revived the deal, they apparently did not satisfy Malone but only whetted his appetite for more. News of the negotiations first became public on August 30th, and Levin hoped to solidify the deal within the next week or two. However, it was not until the end of September that Time Warner and Turner finally settled on their terms, and T.C.I.'s were still being negotiated. Nonetheless—in an occurrence that one seasoned observer said he had never witnessed before—Levin insisted upon holding a press conference, on September 22nd, to announce the deal as though it were done. "Everybody got down on their knees, begging him not to," one person said. But Levin was desperate. "He wanted to freeze them"—Turner and Malone—"and he froze himself." This was an allusion to the increased leverage that Malone gained by Levin's having declared the deal done when it was not. Terms with Malone were not settled on for another couple of weeks. And even those terms, in typical Malone fashion, are not final: if the government, in its antitrust review, demands changes to the deal, Malone has the right to return to the negotiating table, or to walk away.

Malone's package in its current form is a rich one, and reportedly includes not only a premium on Malone's Turner shares but the option to buy Turner sports channels at favorable prices and a six-year option to sell Southern Satellite to Time Warner for three hundred and sixty million dollars (a price that is estimated by analysts to be more than three times its value). In addition, there are discounts that T.C.I. would receive on the prices it would pay for Turner assets' programming. Although it has been reported that Malone has received a discount of fifteen per cent for the next twenty years, two knowledgeable people have told me that what Malone negotiated will give him even more of an edge over his competitors, since it is a *floating* rate—fifteen per cent less than the average buyer's price. While estimates of the value of Malone's package vary widely, it appears to be in the hundreds of millions.

Malone is the biggest beneficiary by far of Levin's largesse with shareholders' money, but he is by no means the only one. According to one person at Time Warner, the Turner shareholders Comcast and Continental Cablevision, after threatening to file suit unless they are given comparable deals, will ultimately receive discounts on Turner cable programming similar to Malone's. And Turner, in addition to having secured the value of roughly two billion dollars for his stock, has demanded a five-year compensation deal for his position as vice-chairman which, with stock options, may be worth about a hundred million. (One Levin associate, predicting that once the deal is consummated Levin will increase his own compensation, said, "It is the Steve Ross theory at work: Pay your underlings very well and then you *have* to pay yourself, so no one can really object.") Moreover, Michael Milken, for his advisory role, is to receive fifty million dollars, a sum that dwarfs the next-largest adviser's fee—ten million, to Morgan Stanley, for its role in advising Time Warner.

Milken, who served two years in prison in the early nineties for violations of securities laws, has been quietly reëmerging, advising Rupert Murdoch, Ronald Perelman, and others; but it is only now that he returned to the public spotlight. One person involved in the deal told me that Milken at first talked about a fee in the range of a hundred million dollars. As Milken is said to have explained, Turner had earlier agreed that Milken would receive two per cent of the money he raised for Turner to take over CBS; the merger of Time Warner and Turner was roughly a ten-billion-dollar deal, and two per cent of ten billion dollars is two hundred million dollars.

" 'So,' he said, 'I'm a bargain at a hundred million!' " this person continued. "We looked for a precedent, and the highest one we could find was Michael Ovitz's fee of forty million in the M.C.A.-Matsushita deal." On this basis, it was decided that the shareholders of Time Warner (in their assumption of Turner's obligations) would pay Milken forty million dollars, and Turner would pay ten million personally. The payment to Milken made some of the directors uneasy, another person said, but "it was finally decided that in a multibillion-dollar deal fifty million could be forgotten in the wash." Or, as one investor commented, "Play money."

Milken is banned for life from the securities industry, but he has said that he was acting simply as a "consultant"; the Securities and Exchange Commission is examining his role in this transaction and in other recent ones. It is remarkable that Milken should be able to indulge his unchanged predilection for excess and the gray area of the law with Time Warner—and, especially, with Time Inc., which not so long ago was a company with a famously well-defined ethical code. (Andrew Heiskell, the former chairman and C.E.O. of Time Inc., told me that when he realized recently that some people assumed he was still a director of the company he was shocked, and even thought of taking out an ad in the *Times* stating, "I am not a Time Warner director!")

Many observers in the financial community regarded this deal, and what one prominent investment banker described as "the ambience of rot surrounding it," as a throwback to the eighties. But, unlike the deals of a decade ago, which were born of an environment of financial euphoria, this one sprang full blown from one person's mind. It was animated by Levin's boundless commitment to the transaction, by his having become so enamored of the *idea* of it, that other considerations took second place.

It was, however, no anomaly for Levin. He was the same person he'd always been—driven, inspired, convinced of the rightness of his vision, careless of its financial construction. An executive of another company, who worked with Levin for years, told me, "Time Inc. was always a strategic-planning company that desperately wanted to see the future—generally, it didn't—and Jerry was made to order there. He was never strong on the economics—it was all the vision. He was always willing to take the chance, always announcing that he had this vision." The executive paused, and then added, "Unfortunately, he's got a batting average: the one big idea, 1976."

The only thing that had really changed with the Turner deal was the extent of Levin's power: now he was in a position where he could give his instincts full sway, and there was no one to temper them. The business associate who had most effectively penetrated Levin's insularity once he had become chairman and C.E.O. of Time Warner was gone. There were many in the early days of the Time-Warner merger who had been critical of Aboodi's role in the company, but no one doubted his financial acumen or his canniness in a deal. One of his former detractors said to me, referring to Aboodi's absence from the Turner deal, and Levin's haplessness, "I never would have thought I'd live to see the day where I'd say, 'Where was Ed Aboodi when I needed him?' He was *very badly* needed in this deal."

ALTHOUGH the consummation of the Turner deal will remain in question for at least several more months, Levin moved quickly in November to turn it to his political advantage within the company, and succeeded in shoring up his position for the near term. Before his quest for Turner began, Daly and Semel, the Warner Bros. partners, were potent adversaries of his, almost surely capable of bringing him down. Today, they are appeased; in fact, they have become Levin's—and the Turner deal's—very vocal supporters. It was not that difficult, really; what they had wanted was Michael Fuchs's head (and his new domain, the music group), and the Turner deal provided Levin with a pretext for giving it to them, in one beribboned package.

Levin and Fuchs had been friendly since Fuchs joined HBO, in 1976. In 1984, Fuchs became the chairman and C.E.O. of HBO, and over the next decade he built it into the world's strongest pay-TV channel, with a reputation for high quality (it has been a consistent Emmy Award winner) and huge profits. HBO was Fuchs's obsession, and his personal stamp was ubiquitous there. Just as in the eyes of many people Steve Ross *was* Warner Communications, so Fuchs *was* HBO. He was notoriously brash, arrogant, and temperamental, too, but he was a star, especially at the old Time Inc., and he was given a star's latitude.

At first, it seemed that the Time-Warner merger might put Fuchs into eclipse. HBO's profits were being increasingly threatened by the proliferation of videocassettes, pay-per-view programming, and advertiser-supported programming such as Turner's TBS. J. Richard Munro, then the chairman of Time Inc., commented that HBO "has been marvelously successful," but "I would dare say its future may be behind it." Fuchs had wanted for some time to expand beyond pay TV; in the merger discussions, he had argued that HBO should have a comedy label at Warner Bros. bringing in new, younger talent and making a few movies a year for theatrical release. Daly and Semel

*"Hold it, sweetie, you forgot your heat."*

were vehemently opposed ("You go develop pay TV around the world!" Semel is said to have snarled to Fuchs), and they won.

That they did so was just one more reflection of the balance of power in the Time-Warner merger: even though Time had bought Warner, providing its executives (including Daly and Semel) with Croesus-like wealth, Warner controlled. Also, Daly and Semel had a great deal of political capital with Ross. Ross had wooed Daly, a highly regarded executive, away from CBS in 1981; Daly elevated Semel, whose experience was in distribution, and the two became partners—running, ever since, what has been the most stable Hollywood studio, without the high turnover that has plagued its competitors. If Daly and Semel wanted to protect their fiefdom and put Fuchs in his place, Ross would not stop them.

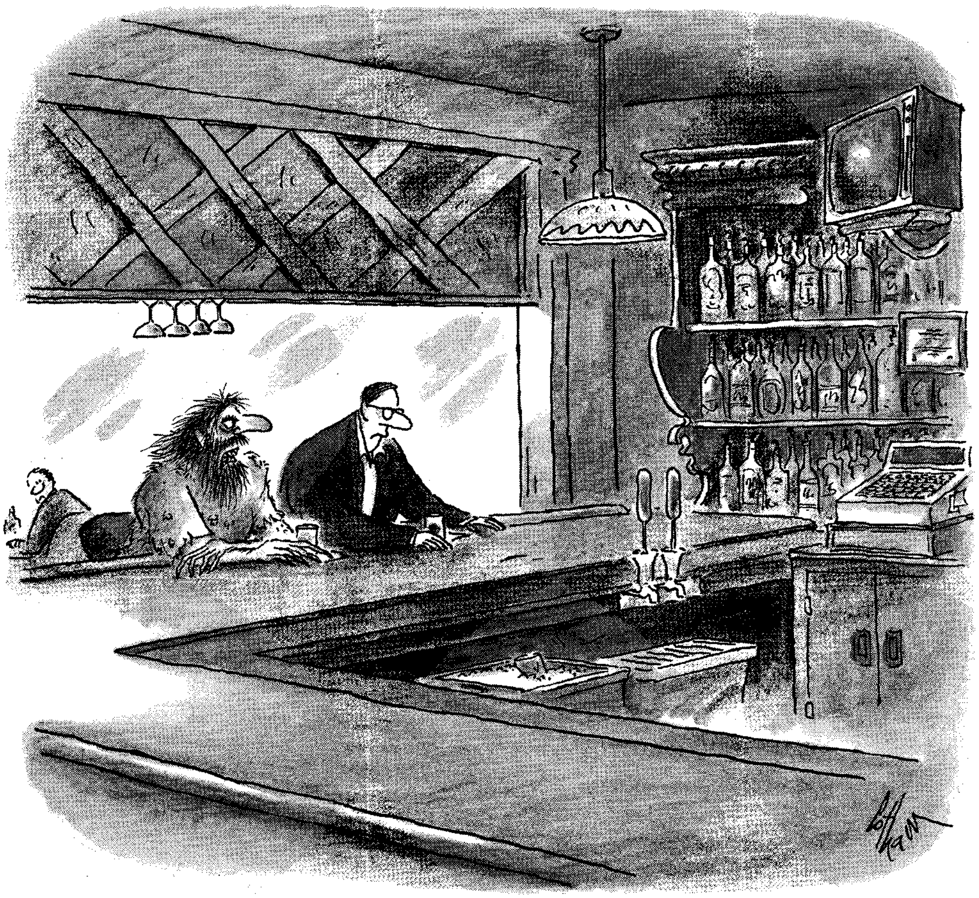
Fuchs, however, succeeded instead in engineering a stunning comeback for HBO, financing original programming by selling foreign rights and by "multiplexing"—giving viewers several satellite feeds to choose from at the same time. He and Daly and Semel fought continuously over the prices HBO would pay Warner Bros. for its movies; and Daly was enraged when HBO agreed to invest as much as five hundred million dollars in a film distributor, Savoy Pictures Entertainment, Inc. Daly and Semel "were gunning for Michael for years," I was told by a studio executive who has known the Warner Bros. partners well for more than a decade. "They had it in for Michael because he wanted to be in the movie business, but they should have recognized that Michael was a savvy player, who made a lot of money for everyone."

Fuchs had assisted Levin in his moves to unseat Nicholas as co-C.E.O. of Time Warner, with the tacit understanding that when Levin took over the company Fuchs would become his No. 2, and perhaps, ultimately, his successor. But Levin, after his ascension, kept all three titles—chairman, C.E.O., and president—for nearly two years; when the board expressed uneasiness, Levin, in late 1994, announced that he would bring in Richard Parsons (himself a board member) to be president. Fuchs felt betrayed, and became more vocal in his criticism of Levin.

Criticism came easily. Although Levin had made a good and bold decision in going outside the company to bring in Norman Pearlstine as the editor-in-chief of Time Inc. (and Pearlstine has already strengthened the magazines), that move was overshadowed by the havoc within the music division. Levin has tended to gravitate toward his Time Inc. home base—publishing and, more than anything, cable. He is least sure-footed in the foreign world of Warner entertainment, especially music. Jac Holzman, a longtime consultant to the Warner Music Group, who sold his company, Elektra Records, to Ross in 1971, said, "What happened in Music was a clear example of Jerry's lack of vision, weak people skills, and unwillingness to make hard choices. And the result was he ended up like a badminton bird going from one polarized decision to another."

Levin was presiding over the rank destabilization of Warner Music, the company's premier cash generator and the most profitable recorded-music company in the world. A chain of events was set off in August, 1994, when Mo Ostin, the chairman of Warner Records, resigned. A legendary figure in the music business, he had built up Warner Records from a company with revenues of a hundred million dollars to one with revenues of two and a half billion. Levin had failed to support him in his attempt to avoid having to report to his longtime antagonist Robert Morgado, the chairman of the Warner Music Group, who had overseen the globalization of the division during the last decade. However, when it became clear that Levin's treatment of Ostin—who is revered, and even beloved, as an industry elder—had outraged the entertainment industry, Levin began efforts to bring Ostin back. They failed. And then, several months after Ostin's departure, Levin fired *Morgado.*

It was an almost farcical sequence of events. When Ross was alive, he had allowed Ostin to report to him, keeping the peace between Ostin and Morgado. And when Ross died it was easy to predict that there could be trouble here. But to suggest that Levin would resolve the situa-



*"I don't get out much—I'm usually locked in a cellar."*

tion as he did—by ridding the company of *both* of them (as well as other talented executives who left with Ostin)—would have strained credulity.

When Levin put Fuchs in charge of the music group, Fuchs balked at giving up his HBO chairmanship, and Levin allowed him to keep control of both divisions. Articles appeared in the press referring to Fuchs as Levin's "heir apparent"—a notion that Fuchs had cultivated (on the strength of Levin's encouragement) since Levin came to power, but one that had not previously gained this kind of currency. Now that it had, Levin, according to one person, was angered, and became "icy" toward Fuchs. And Daly, known for his hot temper, was enraged at the ascension of his archrival.

Daly and Semel had, in fact, been stewing about Levin for some time, no less than Fuchs had. They were unhappy about the stock price, of course, because of their bushelfuls of options—a Ross tradition that Levin has taken further. ("This company treats the stock as though it were free," one investor groused.) They were unhappy about Levin's steering the company further into cable, and away from content. They were further angered by Levin's autocratic style: Ross had made the decisions in the end, too, but he had always told his division heads his plans in advance, giving them the opportunity to air their views. On a more personal level, they were furious about Levin's ousting of Bert Wasserman and about his treatment of Ostin. ("Bob thought Jerry's treatment of Mo was a sin," one of Daly's friends told me.) After enumerating all the above, another friend of theirs said, "Bob and Terry were ready to quit—and that was *before* he gave Music to Fuchs!" This person also said, "Bringing in a Time guy they didn't like, and didn't respect, to run Music—they didn't like it, period. Then, on top of that, it got into an ego thing. They didn't like Fuchs building his power base, striding over two divisions—and there were those news articles saying he was the 'heir apparent.' "

One confidant of Daly's told me that after Ostin's resignation, "Bob started talking to people about how Jerry didn't know what he was doing," and that in conversations last summer—despite the fact that Daly had earlier said he wouldn't want to run Time Warner, because it would mean leaving the West Coast—"Bob was saying that maybe he *would* move back to New York and run the company, in partnership with Terry." Another friend of Daly's told me that Daly had discussed this move with him, too.

That Daly would engage in this kind of political machination should not surprise, but it is a little at odds with his public persona. Lionized by the press, Daly has long been perceived as operating on a somewhat finer, more principled plane than many of his Hollywood counterparts. But one person at Time Warner who has dealt with Daly said that Daly can play the game as well as anyone, and does—and has played it on Levin. Because of the force of Ross's personality, this person said, there was a gravitational pull—with him at the center, he was able to keep the planets in check. But now—absent that centripetal force—Daly and Semel are engaged in a more blatant power play.

As Fuchs cut a broad swath through Music, firing executives and moving to tighten controls on what he saw as a loosely run and disorganized business, Daly became loudly apoplectic in his Hollywood circle. After one firing, a friend of Daly's recalled, "Bob was so mad I thought he was going to get a gun and go shoot Michael Fuchs himself!" The message emanating from the Burbank studio was that Fuchs, an abrasive, arrogant Time guy, had no idea how to treat people in what, as Ross had long ago taught his disciples, was a *people* business ("Our assets walk out the door every night," Ross liked to remind his executives), and that he was undermining the theology that had made Warner Communications great.

Daly, who over the years had become a convert to Ross's theology, probably did have honest differences with Fuchs's approach. But they were convenient differences, allowing him to elevate what had been, from the moment of Fuchs's appointment, a purely personal and political matter (he wanted Music to be his, not Fuchs's) into a matter of principle, and to vent his indignation to Levin and many others. There is no question that Fuchs's style alienated people in the music division, but it is not at all clear that he could be faulted on the substance. Holzman, who said that Fuchs should have been applauded for his major firings, commented, "He did the big things right, and all the little day-to-day things wrong." His firings, moreover, were carried out with Levin's approval.

This was not a contest, however, that would be decided on the merits; given Levin's vulnerability, the only question was how Daly was to be appeased, not whether he should be. And the answer must have begun to become clear once Levin had fastened on the Turner deal. In the days before Levin went to Montana to propose it to Turner, Daly was one of the few people inside the company with whom Levin discussed his plan; and, according to a person close to Daly, he responded with enthusiasm. At roughly the same time, Levin is said to have mentioned his proposition to Fuchs, but in a much different way—describing it as simply a tactical maneuver, which was meant to distract Turner from his CBS fixation but was sure to be ultimately vetoed by Malone.

ON August 31st, the day after news of the negotiations broke in the press, Fuchs received a call from Gordon Crawford, congratulating him on his new position: he was to be in charge of the Turner assets, reporting to Turner. He would thus be leaving Music, just four months after arriving there. It was the first that Fuchs had heard of this move. According to one knowledgeable person, Fuchs, who had been supportive of the deal, is said to have called Levin and demanded to know what was going on, and to have angrily protested that he was not a "plumber," who could just be sent from one job to the next, fixing up companies. Levin is said to have told him that no such decision had been made. And, if it had, it would have been strange indeed—since, in the best-case scenario, the deal was at least nine months from consummation.

Nonetheless, stories began to appear in the press about Fuchs's becoming Turner's No. 2, and so having to give up Music and HBO, and his balking at it; and there was no categorical denial about his job change from Time Warner. To the contrary, on September 14th an article in the *Wall Street Journal* quoted unnamed people "close to the company" discussing these possibilities, and said that "people close to Mr. Levin have heard him say he will 'roll right over' any executive who puts personal ambitions ahead of the transaction."

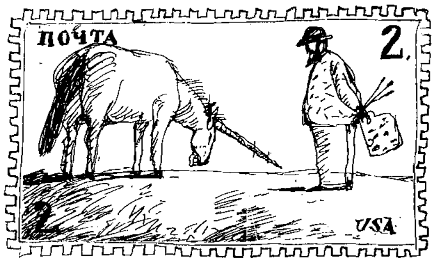
Rough language from the spiritual seeker; there has lately been a new belligerence in Levin, as he seems to be trying to achieve a different persona, a kind of Talmudic don. And, while he may well have been furious (this was the transaction that *nothing* was to get in the way of, and here was Fuchs, obstreperous), there was also a certain staged quality to his anger: the crisis of Fuchs's job change was, at this point, a fabricated one. In any event, the die was quickly cast. As one associate of Levin's told me, Levin considered Fuchs "disloyal." Fuchs did, from this point on, become one of the deal's many detractors; but subordinating one's personal interest to the company's is not a standard that many of his colleagues (including Levin) would be likely to meet, either. One person recalled Fuchs's asking, rhetorically, how Terry Semel would have been likely to react if he heard from outside the company that he was being moved to Atlanta to be Turner's No. 2.

What is more remarkable is that Fuchs did not have a better grasp of the precariousness of his position vis-à-vis Levin. He had watched, after all, as Levin dispatched not only many Ross loyalists but also people who had considered him a friend and ally: Nicholas, Morgado, Aboodi. But these people, too, had been taken unawares, and the fact that they had all been blindsided by Levin may be due in part to his ability to disarm. Nicholas later recalled that, about a year before he was fired, "Jerry said, quite spontaneously, in the middle of a conversation about something else, 'You know, I have completely accepted you as C.E.O.' " Morgado is said to have told several executives at Time Warner that, at the lunch at which Levin asked him to step down, Levin had said, "Of all the people that served me at your level, you are the one I trusted, and who had the best long-range strategic vision." And, according to one knowledgeable person, Levin is said to have told Fuchs, when Fuchs agitated in the past for the promotion that Levin had promised him, that he should not be impatient, because he was the most obvious and most qualified person to run the company—and he is then said to have made deprecating remarks about each of the other division heads.

In mid-November, Levin announced that in the light of the Turner deal he had determined that—in order to promote collaborative teamwork among Time Warner's different divisions, instead of letting them continue as autonomous, and even competitive, entities—the company should be reorganized into three divisions: telecommunications; news and information (including Time and CNN); and entertainment. The Warner Music Group and the Warner Bros. studio would be combined in the entertainment division, with Daly and Semel as chairmen and C.E.O.s of both businesses. Fuchs was fired. He had been widely recognized as one of Time Warner's most talented executives; and his firing, it is estimated, may cost the company more than fifty million dollars. It could bring the severance payments generated by Levin's actions in the last couple of years to more than two hundred million. And, of course, as a corollary of the Fuchs firing, Levin negotiated new five-year contracts with Daly and Semel, and those, according to one person at the company, have a combined value of roughly a hundred and fifty million.

Levin, for his part, in an interview with the *Times*, said that Fuchs's firing was "not about Michael" but, rather, about the corporate restructuring. Levin also seemed to imply, as was his wont, that he had been moved by some higher, ineluctable force. Referring to the organizational chart he'd designed that left no box for Fuchs, Levin said, "It was a structure I was compelled to do."

By mid-February, more than four months after Levin announced the successful culmination of his arduous pursuit of the Turner deal, it seemed to have grown only more elusive. The massive Federal Trade Commission investigation was moving ponderously; because of that, and also the general perception that time is the enemy of deals as large and complicated as this one, some analysts were giving the deal only a fifty-fifty chance of closing. And while the announced deal had won a respite for Levin, its dissolution—which would be read as his failure—might leave him in even greater jeopardy than he was in before.



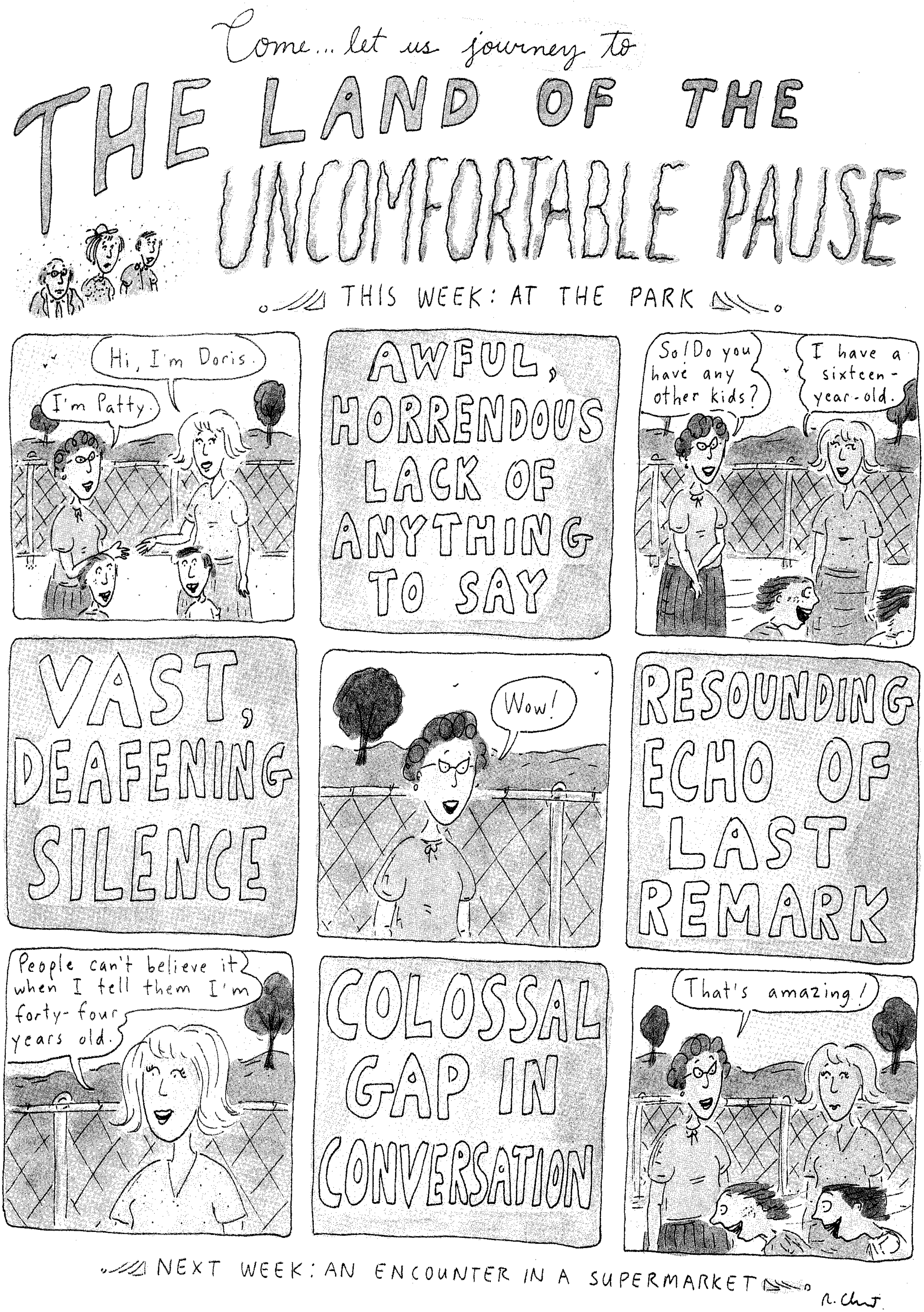
One major obstacle to the deal, however, seems soon to be lifted. The day the Turner deal was announced, U S West, Time Warner's T.W.E. partner, filed suit against the company, alleging that the deal violated the terms of the T.W.E. agreement. Now the suit appears to be heading for settlement, most likely before its trial date of March 13th.

It was Levin himself who engineered the potentially disastrous U S West deal, reached months after Ross died. And it was a very different sort of deal from the ones that Ross had struck with Toshiba and Itochu. U S West, arguing that it was bringing expertise that Time Warner needed in its own advent into telephony, had bargained for management controls that set its deal apart. Ed Aboodi was the negotiator for Time Warner, but, according to one person in the company, he felt that ultimately too much had been given to U S West. "Jerry was so eager to announce it that he pushed Ed to complete it when he wasn't ready," this person said.

In early December, at a meeting attended by a couple of hundred Time Warner cable executives, Levin struck his newly belligerent note, calling the U S West suit a "personal attack" designed to drive down the company's stock price and derail the Turner deal; and he swore that he would not surrender control of cable.

However, he may be on the verge of breaking that vow. A couple of weeks ago, he met with Richard McCormick, the chairman of U S West. And on February 6th Parsons told a meeting of analysts that there had been discussions at the highest levels of the two companies, and that both agreed it made sense to keep all of Time Warner's and U S West's cable operations in a separate company, which would be jointly owned. He declined to speculate on what form that company would take. But several scenarios have been floated in the media in the last week, and, in a couple of them, U S West would have control of the entity. Control, of course, was the sticking point with U S West from the start of the negotiations to unwind T.W.E.

A second question about the U S West settlement is the price. U S West has the advantage of the yardstick set by Toshiba and Itochu, whose negotiations


Come... let us journey to
THE LAND OF THE UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE
THIS WEEK: AT THE PARK
Hi, I'm Doris.
I'm Patty.
AWFUL, HORRENDOUS LACK OF ANYTHING TO SAY
So! Do you have any other kids?
I have a sixteen-year-old.
VAST, DEAFENING SILENCE
Wow!
RESOUNDING ECHO OF LAST REMARK
People can't believe it when I tell them I'm forty-four years old.
COLOSSAL GAP IN CONVERSATION
That's amazing!
NEXT WEEK: AN ENCOUNTER IN A SUPERMARKET
R. Chast

ultimately garnered them a dazzling return of roughly sixty per cent on their two-year investments. (By that measure, U S West estimates its initial investment of $2.5 billion would be worth close to $4 billion today.) And it has the advantage, too, of Time Warner's now evident eagerness to settle, and the fact that, like Jay Chai, it is "in the driver's seat"—it is Time Warner that is desperate to undo the T.W.E. partnership. It is paradoxical, really; when this situation is resolved—despite its having been Levin's mistake, and despite the fact that the company will pay dearly (as one person, assuming Time Warner is going to cede control of cable, remarked, sarcastically, "You give up control of your cable empire for $2.5 billion?")—the stock price will probably rise, and give Levin further respite.

THE Federal Trade Commission, however, remains a formidable obstacle to the Turner deal. According to two people who are knowledgeable about the review in progress there, among the commission's staff the deal's problems are manifold. They are said to exist on both the "horizontal" and the "vertical" level. On the horizontal, because Time Warner and Turner combined would own so much of cable programming. And on the vertical because Time Warner, with T.C.I., its major shareholder, would control so much of both the programming and its distribution system; in other words, it would control the pipelines to roughly half the homes in this country and also what passes through those pipelines—a monopolist's (not to mention a political ideologue's) dream. Moreover, the F.T.C. chairman, Robert Pitofsky—a scholar and former Georgetown University law professor, who believes in more aggressive antitrust enforcement than his recent predecessors, and also believes in giving special attention to media mergers, because of the importance of the "diversity of ideas"—is said to be involved with the case on a day-to-day basis, and to be essentially in accord with the staff's thinking.

Anticipating that the F.T.C. will be concerned about the influence of Malone as a kind of creeping giant in this entity, Time Warner advisers have reasoned that the government will require certain changes to restrict him—among them, the structure of the voting trust and the discounts that his cable systems are to receive on Turner programming. But these advisers seem almost sanguine about the expected objections. "We think any changes the F.T.C. requires will be favorable to Time Warner, because too much was given away," one person close to the company commented, referring to Levin's dealings with Malone. However, while there are fixes for the vertical case—Time Warner's ceding control of cable to U S West would certainly help—there are no comparable fixes for the horizontal case. So it may not be a situation where concessions can win the day.

Even before the deal has closed, some people have been pointing to the startup of CNNfn, Turner's new financial-news channel, as an early sign of the deal's ill effects. One competitor has charged that CNNfn's immediately gaining distribution on Manhattan Cable—Time Warner's system in New York, and the most sought-after system in the country—is an example of the kind of anti-competitive behavior that the deal will foster. (Manhattan Cable already has a financial channel, CNBC, but it gave the franchise to CNNfn even though many other programmers with more varied offerings have been waiting in line for months.) A person close to Time Warner estimated that the channel will ultimately cost CNN roughly a hundred million dollars to launch—a substantial expenditure for Time Warner to assume in its debt-burdened state but one that Levin, in his continuing eagerness to please Turner, would not veto.

SHOULD Levin's deal somehow survive its formidable obstacle course—U S West, the F.T.C., and, of course, Malone's response to any changes the F.T.C. may require—Levin will face new perils. ("Scorpions in a bottle" was the comment of one person who knows Levin, Turner, and Malone well.) Tokens of gratitude like the rapid launching of CNNfn are unlikely to sate Turner. One person who knows him told me that his motivation in agreeing to the deal is uncomplicated: "Ted wants to take control of Time Warner." Indeed, Turner, who, in stark contrast to Levin, has a tendency to say what is on his mind, made a revealing comment at their joint press conference in September. "I'm kind of a white knight," he said. It was, of course, Time Warner that was acquiring Turner, not the other way around, but he was underscoring, quite rightly, the fact that the need to be rescued was on the other side. "Not like Larry Tisch"—the CBS buyer—"who mainly was *supposed* to be a white knight but turned out to be a dark horse," Turner continued, with his cat-that-has-eaten-the-canary grin. There was uncertain laughter from the assembled reporters. "O.K.," said Levin, in obvious discomfiture, taking control back from Turner. The laughter got much bigger.

"Ted loves the story of the underdog that makes it to the top—that's the one he wants to keep playing, and this deal gives him the chance," another longtime Turner associate remarked to me recently. And for him the alternative—working for someone else within the mammoth Time Warner—would be dreary indeed.

Turner and the media entrepreneur Barry Diller were on a panel together at the Western Cable Conference in December, and Diller was taunting Turner for his corporate sellout. "Vice-chairman isn't much of a title," Turner acknowledged disconsolately. In his remarks that day, Turner seemed plainly ambivalent—on the one hand, chortling over the hugeness of the enterprise, and how that would better enable him to "squash" Rupert Murdoch "like a bug" (as Murdoch starts a new twenty-four-hour news channel, to compete with CNN), and, on the other, decrying the dwindling of diversity augured by huge media combinations like this one. He sounded more like a soulmate of Pitofsky's than like a media mogul. "There is a lot less diversity of ownership—in a way I think that's kind of sad," he said. "My company no longer will exist as a separate entity but will be part of a larger company in the form of Time Warner. . . . I don't think it's all good. . . . I think Bob"—Redford, the actor and director, who was also on the panel—"is absolutely right about his fears for the movie business—particularly the big corporate-run studios. I mean, they just turn out the same kind of looking movies for the most part, and they *are* afraid to take chances." He went on to contrast such studios—of which Warner Bros. is a prime example—with his New Line and Castle Rock studios. Of course, in Levin's new structure New Line and Castle Rock would come under the control of Daly and Semel. "It would be a very, very sad day if we just had four or five great big companies controlling all the programming and all the pipelines in the country," Turner continued. "It would be bad for our country and bad for the world."

Malone, who is engaged in a contest with Murdoch to see who can control the most programming and the most pipelines in the world, surely does not share Turner's disquietude on that score. But he, too, is said by several people who know him well to be ambivalent about this deal, despite the richness of the terms he extracted from Levin, and despite the fact that—or so it is widely believed—he has positioned himself well to acquire a controlling position in Time Warner over the next several years. (This would be ironic for Turner, who wanted to protect CNN from the right-winger Rupert Murdoch, since Malone himself is said to have become a right-wing ideologue.) Given Malone's appetite for control, there are probably still too many variables to satisfy him.

Predicting that the F.T.C. would move aggressively against this transaction and it would then break apart, a person who is close to its three principals commented, "John is ambivalent. Ted is ambivalent. There is not enough passion here if the government pushes too hard. The only one who's passionate is Jerry."

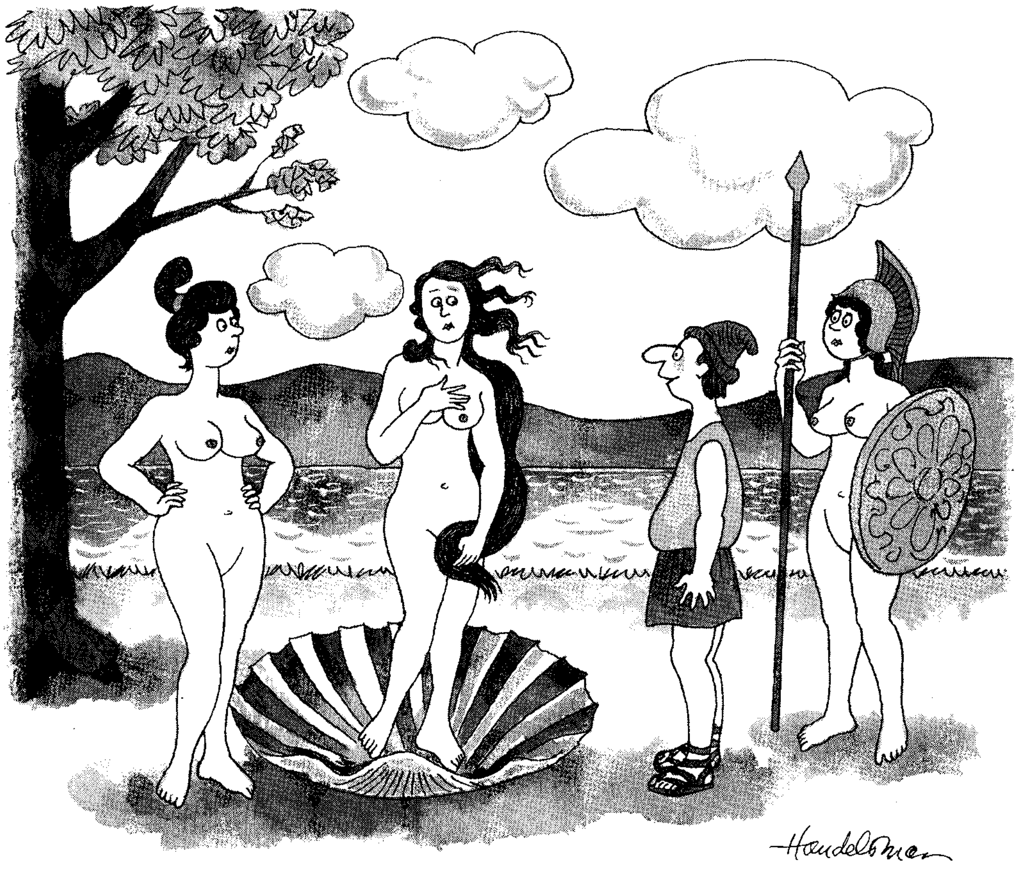
Even the collapse of the Turner deal, however, might not spell the end of Levin's captaincy. February has been, so far, a distinctly brightening month for him: the passage of the telecommunications bill gave some ballast to his cable strategy; settlement with U S West became probable; and the stock price, which sank into the mid-thirties in the aftermath of the announcement of the Turner deal, is now rising into the forties, following Time Warner's announcement of strong fourth-quarter earnings and indications of a U S West settlement.

Levin has proved himself, again and again, a consummate survivor, and may do so once more. One tends to forget that, and count him out, because he doesn't have the brio and life force that one associates with survivors. But it is, perhaps, their very absence that works to his advantage. One investment banker who knows him well commented, "Jerry has traded on his image of impotence . . . and everyone has underestimated him."

There are bound to be further twists and turns, then, before Levin finally vacates his magisterial offices atop the Time Warner Building; but his eventual forced exit seems likely. In the end, his mortal weakness is not really the passions that seem so to overtake him. Ross had passion, too—for cable, in its earliest days, for example—but Ross's passion was alloyed to a preternaturally numerical mind and a keen business instinct. And, at this level of corporate power, it may be that somewhat ineffable instinct which is the real winnower. As a friend of Levin's who knew Ross well commented, Ross had that instinct—and, this person added, Turner and Malone seem to, also. "But Jerry is an intellect player, not an instinct player," this person continued. "For him, it is all the vision, the principle. But deals are not about constitutional law."

It must be trying, of course, always to be compared to Ross, who devoted much of his life to insuring that his persona was mythic—and whose business talents *were.* One well-known investor, who was no particular fan of Ross's, commented to me regarding Levin and Ross, "Steve was a brilliant huckster—but with Steve, at least, he knew what he was doing." Since Ross died, Levin has paid him scant homage; and, recently, he has even, in speeches and private conversations, referred to "the founders of Time Warner" as Henry Luce and Jack Warner.

Such gracelessness has not endeared him to Ross loyalists, nor has it succeeded in obliterating Ross's image. Particularly as the company Ross so loved founders, that image looms large. (One executive told me that he and his colleagues often sit around a table and, presented with some new dilemma, ask each other, "Now, what would Steve do?") A likely scenario for Time Warner, particularly if the Turner deal collapses, is that it will be broken apart, with cable, publishing, and entertainment going separate ways; this mitosis would, essentially, undo the merger of Warner Communications and Time Inc., Ross's grand, capstone scheme. One cannot contemplate that prospect without, almost reflexively, wondering what Ross would have done—and whether he, and he alone, could have made his company whole. ♦



*"I'm afraid I have to recuse myself, ladies. I don't want to be responsible for the Trojan War."*

## LIFE AND LETTERS

# AN OXFORD UNION

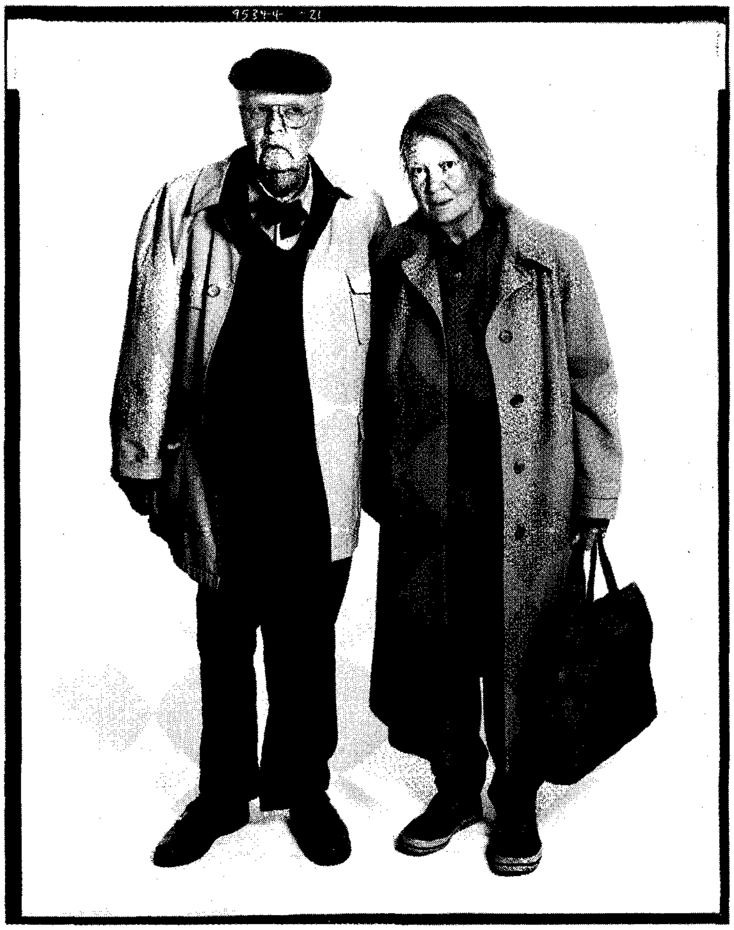
*In Iris Murdoch's twenty-sixth novel, marriage is once again under contention, which makes her life with John Bayley all the more surprising.*

BY IAN HAMILTON

IN Iris Murdoch's "An Unofficial Rose," Hugh Peronett resolves that he will fall in love again with his ex-mistress, Emma Sands. Emma, though, now seems to be in love with Lindsay Rimmer, her female assistant. And Lindsay, it so happens, is also loved by Hugh's son Randall, whose wife, Ann, is loved by Felix, whose sister Mildred is in love with Hugh. Ann and Randall have a daughter, Miranda, who loves Felix and is herself loved by her cousin Penn, who may possibly be loved by Humphrey, Mildred's husband. Nobody loves Humphrey, but Mildred is very fond of him, not least because he doesn't mind that she loves Hugh:

> "Ah, Hugh—" said Mildred. "Yes, he is an ass, dear slow old Hugh, but I love him. What's more, Humpo, I'm going to have him. Would you mind?"
>
> *Humphrey looked at his distinguished* reflection in an oval gilt mirror and smoothed down his white hair. "Of course not, my dear."

In Iris Murdoch's novels, there are several varieties of love—homosexual,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON

*John Bayley and Iris Murdoch, London, December 1, 1995.*

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*"Bad news. It's jungle fever."*

heterosexual, incestuous, delusional, subordinate, imperious—but most of them can be filed under one or the other of two major headings: love, fond; or love, ferocious. Fond love is governed by habit and routine, and it makes no sudden or excited claims. It holds its ground, it bides its time. In "A Severed Head," Murdoch wrote, "There is no substitute for the comfort supplied by the utterly taken-for-granted relationship." Ferocious love, on the other hand, is close to madness and spells trouble. In Murdoch's books, people get afflicted by passion as if by a disease—a sort of brain disease, in fact, for her books are barely erotic at all. And the disease is catching. If A falls victim to a pash for B, we can be pretty sure that B will pass the ailment on to C or—oh, dear—to D or E, either of whom will very likely pass it back to A. And then we'll see some fun: ingenious, clean fun, most of the time, and heavy with symbolic, mythological, or magic trappings.

In Murdoch's version of the educated English upper middle class—post-Second World War—such highbrow sex play is commonplace. It is what happens when fond love becomes ferocious, or tries to, and it can serve as the starting point for many a topnotch discussion over dinner. In this world, marriage is hardly ever a condition to be envied. Behind its determinedly well-mannered frontage, disruption and deceit make merry.

In real life, Iris Murdoch has been married to the literary scholar and essayist John Bayley for four decades, and over the years their union has become the stuff of doting legend. In literary circles, John and Iris are generally agreed to be the perfect match. They have succeeded, it is said, where so many of Murdoch's fictional characters have failed.

BAYLEY and Murdoch met at Oxford in the early fifties. Bayley was in his late twenties and a part-time tutor in English at St. Antony's College. Murdoch was teaching philosophy at St. Anne's. He had spotted her cycling past his college window. "A very ordinary-looking girl, I thought, on an old-fashioned bicycle," he told one interviewer. "I'm not sure if it wasn't the bicycle I liked most. I thought, That's just the sort of girl who would *do*." Bayley was not then aware that Murdoch was almost six years older than he was and had had a fairly lively past.

Born in 1919, in Ireland, the only child of a civil-servant father and an opera-singer mother, Murdoch was brought up in London, attended progressive schools, and took a first in "Greats"—a combined classics, ancient history, and philosophy degree—from Oxford. As a student, she flirted with Communism for a spell, but after graduation, in 1942, she took a job in the Treasury. She left before the war was over to do refugee-relief work for the United Nations, which took her to Belgium and Austria. She considered making a career of that work, until she read Sartre's "Being and Nothingness," and found herself drawn back to philosophy. (A monograph on Sartre was Murdoch's first published work, and Sartre's associate Raymond Queneau became her good friend; her first published novel, "Under the Net," was dedicated to him.) In 1947, she returned to England, studied for a year at Cambridge, where she met Wittgenstein, and then took up her appointment at St. Anne's. Murdoch's novels sometimes feature powerful, all-knowing guru figures, and the evidence suggests that at this stage of her life she was inclined to seek out intellectual heroes. Elias Canetti was one of her own gurus, and when Bayley met her she was in love with the Czech poet-anthropologist Franz Steiner—a figure of some brilliance and intensity, by all accounts. Steiner died of a heart attack in 1952 at the age of forty-three. "His death," she said, "was a great loss."

John Bayley's background was less vivid and eventful. Although he was born in India and was half Irish on his mother's side, he was, in terms of education and upbringing, as English as could be. The son of an Army officer, he went to Eton and afterward studied English literature at New College, Oxford, under Lord David Cecil, an arch-exponent of the university's special brand of gentleman-amateur belletrism—and a far cry from Sartre and Queneau. In Cecil's school of English, the term "amateur" was not dispraising in the least. Amateurism was seen as an actively beneficial force, suggesting, as it did, "taste" as opposed to "judgment." Judgment was what Cambridge, or parts of it, went in for. At Oxford, civilized Cecilians were not afraid of words like "beauty," "truth," and "feeling," even if they were not always able to pronounce them. Lord David's stutter was thought of as a mark of high-bred diffidence, and so was John Bayley's. (As an Oxford undergraduate in the fifties, I expected my tutors to stutter; it was their way of not *insisting*, I thought, and very Oxford.)

During the war, Bayley saw service in the Army, at first with the Grenadier Guards and later with Special Intelligence, but he was not, it seems, the military type. Oxford friends still chuckle over his exploits in the field. As one of them remembers, "John once drove a fleet of lorries—or tanks, was it?—to the edge of the sea and ordered his men to have them washed. Of course, the whole lot sank to their axles in the sand and had to be dug out, at huge expense." Like some other Bayley stories, this one sounds too bumblingly donnish to be true, although Bayley confirms a more modest version of the tale, involving but a single small tank. A. N. Wilson, who is Iris Murdoch's authorized biographer, told the London *Times* that Bayley was probably quite good at soldiering: "John would be a very good man to go into a jungle with. He knows how cars and aeroplanes work, and I imagine is a great survivor." To this day, Bayley's bedtime reading includes books on the history of small arms.

WHEN Bayley met Iris Murdoch, he was "shaken," he has said, to learn that she had had love affairs, having "assumed that she was completely virginal and fancy-free," as he seems to have been. It also troubled him that she had no wish to get married. Still, he declared himself and pursued her for two years; he just "hung on." The silent but dogged wooer is another regular in Murdoch's books. She relented, she once told the *Independent*, "because John is the person I got on perfectly with." She elaborated slightly, saying, "I didn't fall in love with him instantaneously, because we didn't get to know each other all that well straight away, but, as soon as we did, it was clear."

At the time of their marriage, in 1956, each had claims to being thought of as a novelist. Murdoch's "Under the Net" appeared in 1954, and so did Bayley's own first novel, "In Another Country." Bayley also had a local reputation as a poet, having won Oxford's 1950 Newdigate Prize for a work called "El Dorado." Admirers of Bayley's novel regret that, with marriage, he abandoned fiction for literary criticism. As he describes it, the decision was quite simple: Iris had the talent and he didn't. He attempted one or two other novels, but, he says, "they never got anywhere, and Iris was forging ahead." He continues, "I thought, I shall sit around and be an academic, so I started to write critical books. I was not a bit resentful. I think there was not much doubt about it. Iris was one of those meteors who are instantly recognized." Bayley published "The Romantic Survival" in 1957, and, in 1960, "The Characters of Love," in which he argued for a revived reverence for "character" in fiction. By that time, Murdoch was writing her fifth novel. She pauses for at least half an hour on finishing a novel before she starts the next one. "Jackson's Dilemma," just published, is her twenty-sixth.

Murdoch and Bayley get rave reviews for their generosity, their hospitality, and their warmth. Certainly, when I visited them in Oxford a few weeks ago, they both seemed more concerned about entertaining me as a guest than about coping with me as an intruding sleuth. And I enjoyed myself. I even enjoyed lunch, which several people had warned me to beware of. John Bayley's cooking is famously "inventive": on one occasion, an entire dinner—by some in-oven chemical reaction—managed to turn blue. My own lunch was served picnic style in the kitchen and was not at all discolored: pâté, cheddar, bread, and a very superior red wine. My placemat was a back issue of the *London Review of Books*. Smoking was enthusiastically encouraged.

As for my intended interview, it never quite took off. Mostly, I learned what I already knew: he cooks, she does the washing up; she sews, he buys his suits from Oxfam charity shops; they both claim ignorance of computers and TV; they have no children. "Iris never in the least wanted children," Bayley has said. "She wanted to be a writer. We've never regretted that. Children can so often be a source of trouble." Murdoch told one interviewer that it was "my fate, my destiny. There was no particular reason. We left it to the gods, and that's just how things worked out. I never went into the matter." I also knew—but didn't ask—about their honeymoon. Bayley has written, "I remember almost everything about our honeymoon except the sex, which was perfectly pleasurable but rather absent-minded."

For most of the lunch, Bayley and I chatted about literary-world this and that, and Murdoch remained silent. She seemed inattentive but now and then weighed in with a "Where do you live?" or "Are you tidy?" Direct questions were deflected with some ease. When I asked, "Most literary marriages are at some level competitive, are they not?" Bayley answered, "I remember a rather splendid remark by Anthony Powell. He said, 'More marriages come to grief through envy rather than jealousy.' Envy does cover a lot of ground. You can be envious of your spouse for all kinds of reasons."

Was he, then, in charge of practical matters, while Iris got on with her books?

"I think in a sort of way I have been the practical one, but I'm not very good at it," he said. "We've never seemed to need to be very practical."

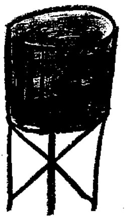
At this Iris asked, "What would be the opposite, so to speak?"

Bayley: "Interesting point. What it would be, I suppose, is if one of us was simply doing the great work, as it were, and the other was acting as the great supporter and encourager. Whereas we really never pay much attention to what the other one is doing, except in a friendly sort of way."

"I'M nice, but not good," John Bayley once boasted to A. N. Wilson in an allusion to Murdoch's 1968 novel, "The Nice and the Good." Iris Murdoch, on the other hand, is always written up as nice *and* good, and not just because the quest for "goodness" (What is it? Must it always fail? Can it manage without supernatural support?) is so often at the center of her books, especially the later ones. A. S. Byatt says that since she has known Murdoch she has found it difficult to tell lies. And nobody speaks ill of Iris. "We never get cross with each other," Bayley told the *Evening Standard*. "She really is the most good-natured person I've ever met. She has a wonderful life of the imagination. If you lead that strange internal life, it takes away all aggression."

For forty years, the Bayleys have lived quietly in or around Oxford. In 1963, Murdoch gave up her full-time teaching position at St. Anne's College, and in 1974 Bayley became the university's Warton Professor of English Literature; he retired in 1992. From time to time, they have done teaching stints in the United States, and sometimes they go on joint lecture tours for the British Council, as they did last year in Israel. They don't like to be apart, and rarely are.

Over the years, Murdoch's novels have won many prizes (including the 1978 Booker, for "The Sea, the Sea"), and Bayley has continued to publish distinguished works of criticism: studies of Tolstoy and Pushkin, Hardy and Housman. He has also been a busy and benign reviewer of new books—well, mostly benign. Graham Greene brings out the beast in him: "One of the most overrated reputations made in the novel this century." He also misses no opportunity to deride Derridistes—indeed, to deride all literary theory, of whatever stripe. Bayley's successor as Warton Professor was Terry Eagleton. In 1983, Bayley reviewed Eagleton's "Literary Theory: An Introduction" in the *Times Literary Supplement*. According to Eagleton, all students and critics of literature are theorists at heart, and people who attack his theories are really defending theories of their own. At this, Bayley saw red. Eagleton, he wrote, was cutting academics off from both ordinary readers and the experience of reading: "To be enthralled by literature, to laugh and cry over it, to wish to know more about what is happening in it, is an equivalent of our instinctual use of language, or of the bicyclist or violinist who has come to be able to do it without knowing how."



Two years ago, as chairman of the Booker Prize committee, Bayley caused something of an English rumpus by saying that he wished new novels were more entertaining—more like Barbara Pym's, which he finds "soothing." As if to offer an example, he resumed writing fiction. "Alice," the first novel in a planned trilogy, came out in 1994 and is a model of elegant, low-pressure pointlessness: very readable but almost effortfully "minor." What does this connoisseur of the light touch make of his wife's most recent novels, with their interminable talk-ins about truth and goodness? On this subject he is always diplomatic. Do he and Iris look to each other for critical approval? "I don't think so," he says. "I occasionally say I enjoy one of her books, but I don't specify."

One suspects that he might prefer Murdoch's earlier work—work often mocked as "middlebrow" and "novelettish" (as in Malcolm Bradbury's one-line parody: "Flavia says Hugo tells her that Augustina is in love with Fred"). "The Sandcastle," perhaps the most unblushingly plot-driven of her early books, is dedicated to Bayley and has a character called Bledyard. His theories—if they can be so called—about the impenetrable "otherness" of other people are roughly in line with Bayley's, as he explains them in "The Characters of Love": "What I understand by an author's love for his characters is a delight in their independent existence as *other people*, an attitude towards them which is analogous to our feelings towards those we love in life; and an intense interest in their personalities combined with a sort of detached solicitude, a respect for their freedom." "The Sandcastle," though, appeared in 1957; "The Characters of Love" in 1960. "Well, yes, we certainly talked a lot about that," Bayley concedes. And Murdoch says that this notion of the alterity of other people "was all going on before I met John." She adds, "After all, I was in all sorts of adventures and I was in Austria."

ONE day, no doubt, a thesis will be written on John Bayley's influence on Iris Murdoch. Views on this subject differ. A. S. Byatt, whose "Degrees of Freedom" is a study of Murdoch's early books, says, "I must admit to a certain curiosity as to what she would have been like if he hadn't made her as English as she has become." Byatt believes that Murdoch without Bayley might have been more of an intellectual heavyweight, more boldly European and experimental. As Byatt sees it, a hard-edged, Cambridge sort of mind may well have been undone by Oxford levity.

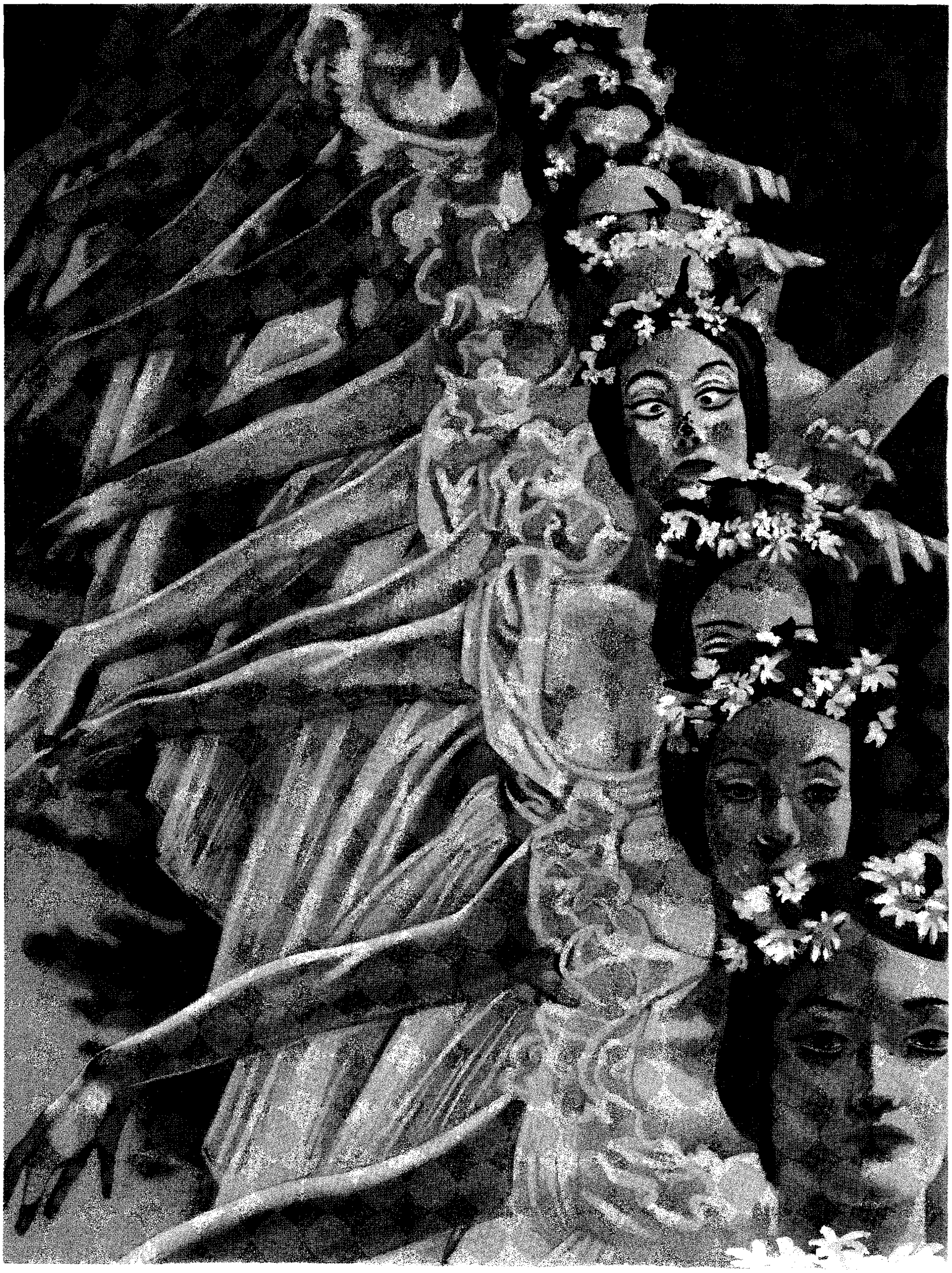
A. N. Wilson takes an altogether different line. According to him, Bayley was never the soft Oxford option. On the contrary, he tells me, "From the very beginning, she thought of him as a great mind. She has always seen him as a great intellectual, on a European, world level. His German was better than hers. He knew Russian. And I remember her saying to me that the one thing she's most grateful to John for was seeing God out of the question. She was very religious by disposition. And when she came back to Oxford, from Cambridge, although she had this great brush with European metaphysics, she nonetheless was drawn to the Oxford High Church—emotionally, until John put paid to that. Very effectively. And she was very grateful for that."

God may have been dealt with, but the problem of godlessness remains. "I have wanted to move from 'God' to 'good,' " she once wrote. "Good novels concern the fight between good and evil. They are amazingly moral." And Bayley agrees, although he puts it differently: "As long as human beings accept one another with love their artists will try to embody that love in the representation of men and women and of the external world."

A third view of the Bayley marriage, expounded by an old friend of theirs, may be the closest to the truth. According to this friend, the couple's seemingly opposed milieux—her deep-dish metaphysics, his lightness and taste—have from the start been delicately complementary, a happy convergence of two vital styles of thought. And this convergence, the friend says, has deepened steadily over the years. "It's now a unity, a marriage. John and Iris would each have been much less without the other. Their marriage was a quite extraordinary piece of good fortune for both of them. They each owe it a great deal." ♦

EASEL • BY M. SCOTT MILLER

# PLIÉSONS DANGEREUSES



## FICTION

# LOOSE CONTINUITY

### BY WILLIAM BOYD

I AM standing on the corner of Westwood and Wilshire, just down from the Mobil gas station, waiting. There is a coolish breeze managing to blow from somewhere, and I am glad of it—nine o'clock in the morning, and it's going to be another hot one, for sure. For the third or fourth time, I needlessly go over and inspect the concrete foundation, note again that the power lines have been properly installed and the extra bolts I requested are duly there. Where is everybody? I look at my watch, light another cigarette, and begin to grow vaguely worried: Have I come on the wrong day? Has my accent confused Mr. Bowdrey? (He is always asking me to repeat myself.)

A bright curtain—blue and ochre—boils and billows from an apartment window across the street. It sets a forgotten corner of my mind working—who had drapes like that, once? Who owned a skirt that was similar, or perhaps a tie?

A klaxon honks down Wilshire, and I look up to see Spencer driving the crane, pulling slowly across two lanes of traffic and coming to a halt at the curb.

He swings himself down from the cab and takes off his cap. His hair is getting longer, losing that Army crop.

"Sorry I'm late, Miss Velk, the depot was, you know, crazy, impossible."

"Doesn't matter, it's not here yet anyway."

"Yeah, right." Spencer paces the twenty feet of concrete plinth to check the power-line connection, touching and jiggling the bolts and their brackets. He goes around the back of the crane and sets out the wooden "Men at Work" signs, then reaches into his pocket and hands me a crumpled sheet of flimsy.

"The permit," he explains. "We got till noon."

"Even on a Sunday?"

"Even on a Sunday. Even in Los Angeles." He shrugs. "Even in 1945. Don't worry, Miss Velk. We got plenty of time."

I turn away, a little exasperated. "We do as long as it gets here," I say with futile determination, as if I had the power to threaten. The drape streams out of the window suddenly, like a banner, and catches the sun. Then I remember: like the wall hanging Utta had done. The one that Tobias bought.

Spencer asks me if he should go phone the factory, but I say to give them an extra half hour. I am remembering another Sunday morning, sunny like this one but not as hot, and half the world away, and I can see myself walking up Grillparzerstrasse, taking the shortcut from the station, my suitcase heavy in my hand, and hoping, wondering, now that I have managed to catch the dawn train from Sorau, if Tobias will be able to find some time to see me alone that afternoon.

GUDRUN VELK walked slowly up Grillparzerstrasse, enjoying the early morning sun, her tall body canted over to counterbalance the weight of her suitcase. She was wearing (what was I wearing?) she was wearing baggy cotton trousers with elastic at the ankles, a sky-blue blouse, and the jacket embroidered with multicolored alphabets—"all lower-case, the way we like them here," Tobias always said. Gudrun's fair hair was down, and she wore no makeup; she was thinking about Tobias, and whether they might see each other that day, and whether they might make love. Thinking about Utta, if she would be up when Gudrun got home. Thinking about the two thick skeins of still-damp blue wool in her suitcase, wool that she had dyed herself late the night before at the mill in Sorau and that she felt sure would finish her rug perfectly and, most important, in a manner that would please Paulus.

Paulus looked in on the weaving workshop often. Small, with dull olive skin and large eyes below a high forehead, eyes that seemed to brim with unshed tears. He quietly moved from loom to loom and the weavers would slip out of their seats to let him have an unobstructed view. Gudrun had started her big knotted rug, and he stood in front of it for some minutes, silently contemplating the first squares and circles. She waited: sometimes he would look, say nothing, and move on. Now, though, he said, "I like the shapes, but the yellow is wrong—it needs more lemon, especially set beside that peach color." He shrugged, adding, "In my opinion." That was when she bought his book and started to go to his classes on color theory, on dynamics, and on structure; she unpicked the work she had done and began again. She told him, "I'm weaving my rug based on your chromatic principles." He was pleased, she thought. He said politely that in that case he would follow its progress with particular interest.

He was not happy at the Institute, she knew; since Meyer took over, the mood had changed, was turning against Paulus and the other painters. Meyer was against them; he felt they smacked of Weimar, of the bad old days. Tobias said the same. "Bogus-advertising-theatricalism," he would state. "We should have left all that behind." What the painters did was "decorative"; need one say more? So Paulus was gratified to find someone who responded to his theories instead of mocking them, and in any case the mood in the weaving workshops was different, what with all the young women. There was a joke in the Institute that the women revered him, called him "the dear Lord." He did enjoy the time he spent there, he told Gudrun later; of all the workshops, it was the weavers he would miss most, he said, if the day came for him to leave—all the girls, all the bright young women.

SPENCER leans against the pole that holds the power lines. The sleeve of his checked shirt falls back to reveal more of his burned arm. It looks pink and new and oddly, finely ridged, like bark or like the skin you get on cooling hot milk. He taps a rhythm on the creosoted pole with his thumb and the two remaining fingers on his left hand. I know the burn goes the length of his arm and then some, but the

ANDERS WENNGREN

hand has taken the full brunt. He turns and sees me staring.

"How's the arm?" I ask.

"I've got another graft next week. We're getting there, slow but sure."

"What about this heat? Does it make it worse?"

"It doesn't help, but . . . I'd rather be here than in Okinawa," he says. "Damn right."

"Of course," I say, "of course." He's told me he was injured in the Ardennes, last winter, during an air attack.

"Yeah." He exhales and seems on the point of saying something—he is talking more about the war, these days—when his eye is caught. He straightens.

"Uh-oh," he says. "Looks like Mr. Bowdrey is here."

UTTA BENRATH had dark-orange hair, strongly hennaed, which, with her green eyes, made her look foreign to Gudrun, but excitingly so. As if she were a half-breed of some impossible sort—Irish and Malay, Swedish and Peruvian. She was small and wiry and used her hands expressively when she spoke, fists unclenching slowly like a flower opening, or thrusting, palming movements, her fingers always flexing. Her voice was deep and she had a throaty, man's chuckle, like a hint of wicked fun. Gudrun met her when she answered the advertisement Utta had placed on the notice board in the students' canteen: "Room to rent. Share facilities and expenses."

When Gudrun began her affair with Tobias she realized she had to move out of the hostel she was staying in. The room in Utta's apartment was cheap, and not only because the apartment was small and had no bathroom: it was also inconvenient—a brisk forty-five-minute walk from the Institute. The apartment was on the top floor of a tenement building on Grenz Weg, out in Jonitz, with a distant view from the kitchen window of a turgid loop of the Mulde River. The place was clean and simply furnished. On the walls hung brightly colored designs for stained-glass windows that Utta had drawn in Weimar. Here in Dessau she was an assistant in the mural-painting workshop. She was older than Gudrun—probably in her early thirties—but her unusual coloring made her age seem almost an irrelevance: she looked so unlike anyone Gudrun had seen before that age seemed to have little or nothing to do with the impression she made.

There were two bedrooms in the apartment on Grenz Weg, a small kitchen with a stove, and a surprisingly generous hall where Utta and Gudrun would eat their meals at a square scrubbed-pine table. They washed in the kitchen, standing on a towel in front of the sink. They carried their chamber pots down four flights of stairs and emptied them in the night-soil cistern in the small yard behind the apartment building. Gudrun developed a strong affection for their four rooms: her bedroom was the first of her own she'd had outside her parents' house; the flat was the first proper home of her adult life. Most evenings, she and Utta prepared their meal—sausage, nine times out of ten, with potatoes or turnips—and then, if they were not going out, they would sit on the bed in Utta's room and listen to music on her phonograph. Utta would read or write—she was working hard at a course in architectural drawing—and they would talk. Utta's concentration, Gudrun soon noticed, her need for further credentials, her ambitions, were motivated by pessimism about her position in the Institute, a theme to which all talk inevitably returned. She was convinced that the mural-painting workshop was to be closed and that she would have to leave. She adduced evidence, clues, hints that she was sure proved this was Meyer's intention. Look what had happened to stained glass, she said, to the wood- and stone-carving workshops. The struggle it had taken to transfer had almost finished her off. That's why she wanted to be an architect: these days everything had to be practical, manufactured. Productivity was the new God. But it took so long, and if they closed the mural-painting workshop . . . Nothing Gudrun said could reassure her. All Utta's energies were devoted to finding a way to stay on.

"I've heard that Marianne Brandt hates Meyer," she reported one night, with excitement, almost glee. "No, I mean really hates him. She detests him. She's going to resign, I know it."

"Maybe Meyer will go first," Gudrun said. "He's so unpopular. It can't be nice for him."

Utta laughed. And laughed again. "Sweet Gudrun," she said, and reached out to pat her foot. "Never change."

"But why should it affect you?" Gudrun asked. "Marianne runs the metal workshop."

"Exactly," Utta said, with a small smile. "Don't you see? That means there'll be a vacancy, won't there?"

MR. BOWDREY steps out of his car and wrinkles his eyes at the sun. Mrs. Bowdrey waits patiently until he comes around and opens the door for her. Everyone shakes hands.

"Bet you're glad you're not in Okinawa, eh, Spence?" Mr. Bowdrey says.

"Fire from heaven, I hear," Spencer says with some emotion.

"Oh, yeah? Sure sounds like that." Mr. Bowdrey turns to me. "How're we doing, Miss Velk?"

"Running a bit late," I say. "Maybe in one hour, if you come back?"

He looks at his watch, then at his wife. "What do you say to some breakfast, Mrs. Bowdrey?"

TOBIAS liked to be naked. He liked to move around his house doing ordinary things, naked. Once, when his wife was away, he had cooked Gudrun a meal and asked her to eat it with him, naked. They had thick slices of smoked ham, she remembered, with a pungent radish sauce. They sat in his dining room, and ate and chatted as if living naked were perfectly normal. Gudrun recognized that it aroused him sexually, that it was a prelude to lovemaking, but she began to feel cold, and before he served the salad she asked if she could go and put on her sweater.

Tobias Henzi was one of the three Masters of Form who ran the architecture workshop. He was a big, burly man who would become seriously fat in a few years, Gudrun realized. His body was covered with a pelt of fine, dark hair, almost like an animal's; it grew especially thick on his chest and belly and, curiously, in the small of his back, but his whole body—his buttocks, his shoulders—was covered with this fine, glossy fur. At first, she thought she would find it repugnant, but it was soft, not wiry, and now when they were in bed she often discovered herself absentmindedly stroking him, as if he were a great cat or a bear, as if he were a rug she could pull round her.

They had met at the Institute's big party in 1926, where the theme was "White." Tobias had gone as a padded, grotesque Pierrot, a white cone on his head, his face a mask of white greasepaint. Gudrun had been a colonialist, in a man's white suit with a white shirt and tie, and her hair up under a solar topee. By the party's end, well into the next day, she had gone into an upstairs lavatory to undo her tight bun, vaguely hoping that loosening her hair would ease her headache.

Her hair was longer then, falling to her shoulders, and as she came down the stairs to the main hall she saw Tobias, a large, rumpled, clearly drunken Pierrot, sitting on a landing and smoking a dark, knobbled cigar. He watched her descend, a little amazed, it seemed, blinking as if to clear some obstruction to his vision.

She stepped over his leg. She knew who he was.

"Hey, you," he shouted after her. "I didn't know you were a woman." His tone was affronted, aggressive, almost as if she had deliberately misled him. She did not look around.

The day the new term began, he came to the weaving workshop to find her.

I TAKE my last cigarette from the pack and light it. I sit on the step below the cab of Spencer's crane, where there's some shade. I see Spencer coming briskly back along the sidewalk from the pay phone. He's a stocky man, with the stocky man's vigorous, rolling stride, as if the air is crowding him and he's shouldering it away, forcing his passage through.

"They say it left an hour ago." He shrugs. "Must be some problem on the highway."

"Wonderful." I blow smoke into the sky, loudly, to show my exasperation.

"Can I bum one of those off of you?"

I show him the empty pack.

"Lucky Strike." He shrugs. "I don't like them, anyway."

"I like the name. That's why I smoke them."

He looks at me. "Yeah, where do they get those names? Who makes them up? I ask you."

" 'Camel.' "

"Yeah," he says. "Why a camel? Do camels smoke? Why not a . . . a hippo? I ask you."

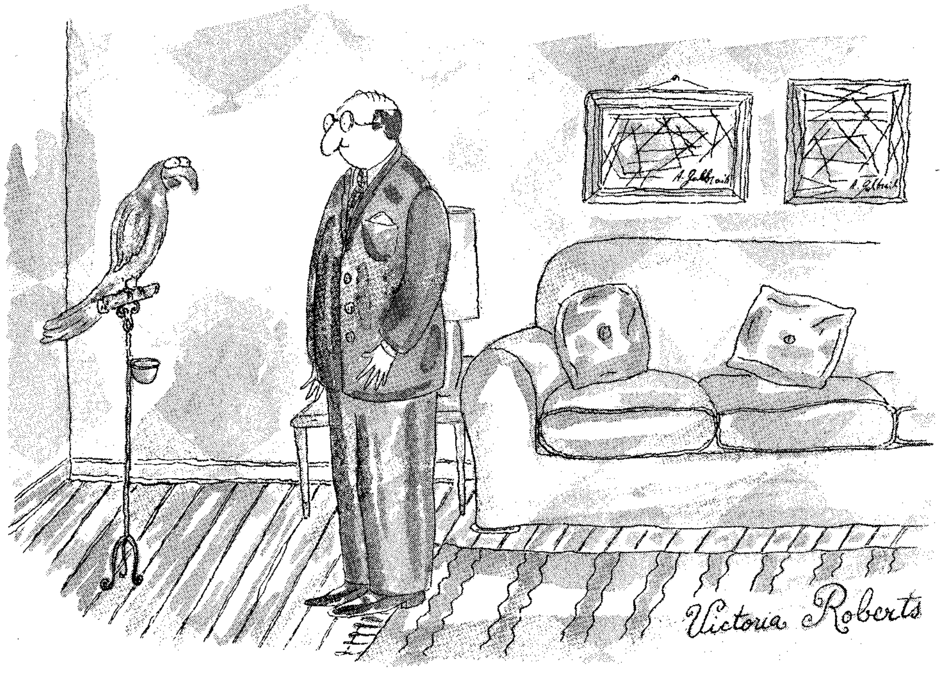
I laugh. "A pack of Hippos, please."

He grins and cuffs the headlamp nacelle. He makes a *tsssss* sound, and shakes his head, incredulously. He looks back at me.

"Goddam factory. Must be something on the highway."

"Can I buy you some breakfast, Spencer?"

PAULUS met Tobias only once in Gudrun's company. It was one afternoon at four o'clock, when the workshops closed. The weavers worked four hours in the morning, two in the afternoon. The workshop was empty. The big rug was half done, pinned up on an easel in the middle of the room. Paulus stood in front of it, the fingers of his right hand slowly stroking his chin, looking, thinking. From time to time he would cover his left eye with his left palm.



*"I was unreliable in a previous lifetime."*

"I like it, Gudrun," he said, finally. "I like its warmth and clarity. The color penetration, the orangy-pink, the lemons . . . What's going to happen in the bottom?"

"I think I'm going to shade into green and blue."

"What's that black?"

"I'm going to have some bars, some vertical, one horizontal, with the cold colors."

He nodded and stepped back. Gudrun, who had been standing behind him, moved to one side to allow him a longer view. As she turned, she saw that Tobias had come into the room and was watching them. He sauntered over and greeted Paulus coolly and with formality.

"I came to admire the rug," Paulus said. "It's splendid, no?"

Tobias glanced at it. "Very decorative," he said. "You should be designing wallpaper, Miss Velk, not wasting your time with this." He turned to Paulus. "Don't you agree?"

"Ah. Popular necessities before élitist luxuries," Paulus said, wagging a warning finger at her, briefly. The sarcasm sounded most strange coming from him, Gudrun thought.

"That's one way of putting it," Tobias said. "Indeed."

WE sit in a window of a coffee shop in Westwood Village. I've ordered a coffee and Danish, but Spencer has decided to go for something more substantial: a rib-eye steak with fried egg.

"I hope the Bowdreys don't come back too soon," Spencer says. "Maybe I shouldn't have ordered the steak."

I press my cheek against the warm glass of the window. I can just see the back end of Spencer's crane.

"I'll spot them," I say. "And I'll see the truck from the factory. You eat up."

Spencer runs his finger along the curved aluminum beading that finishes the table edge.

"I want you to know, Miss Velk, how grateful I am for the work you've put my way." He looks me in the eye. "More than grateful."

"No, it is I who am grateful to you." I smiled. "It's not easy to find someone so reliable."

"Well, I really appreciate what you—"

His steak comes, and puts an end to what I'm sure would have been long protestations of mutual gratitude. It's too hot to eat pastry, so I push my Danish aside and wonder where I can buy some more cigarettes. Spencer, holding his fork like a dagger in his injured left hand, stabs his steak to keep it steady on the plate and, with the knife in his right, sets about trying to cut the meat into pieces. He is having difficulty: his thumb and two fingers can't keep a good grip on the fork handle, and he saws awkwardly with the knife.

"Damn thing is, I'm left-handed," he says, sensing me watching. He works off a small corner, pops it into his mouth, and then sets about the whole pinioning, slicing operation again. The plate slides across the shiny tabletop and collides with my coffee mug. A small splash flips out.

"Sorry," he says.

"Could I do that for you?" I ask. "Would it bother you?"

He says nothing, and I reach out and gently take the knife and fork from him. I cut the steak into cubes and hand back the knife and fork.

"Thank you, Miss Velk."

"Please call me Gudrun," I say.

"Thank you, Gudrun."

"GUDRUN! Gudrun, over here!" Utta was beckoning from the doorway of Tobias's kitchen. Gudrun moved with difficulty through the crowd, finding a gap here, skirting an expansive gesture there. Utta drew her into the kitchen, where there was quite a mob, too; she refilled both their glasses with punch and raised her own.

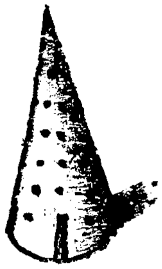
"I give you Marianne Brandt," Utta said, quietly. She smiled.

"What do you mean?"

"She did resign."

"What happened? Who told you?"

Utta discreetly inclined her head toward the window. "Irene," she said. Standing by the sink talking to three young men was Tobias's wife, Irene Henzi. Gudrun had not seen her there. She had arrived at the party late, uneasy at the thought of being in Tobias's house, meeting his wife and other guests. Tobias had assured her that Irene knew nothing—Irene was ignorance personified, he said, the quintessence of ignorance. Utta carried on talking, something about amalgamation, about metal, joinery, and mural-painting all being coördinated into a new workshop of interior design, while Gudrun covertly scrutinized her hostess. Irene did not look to her like an ignorant woman, she looked like a woman brimful of knowledge. "I told you it would happen. Arndt's going to run it. But Marianne's refused to continue," Utta was saying. Gudrun did not listen further. Irene Henzi was tall and thin, she had a sharp, long face with hooded, sleepy eyes and wore a loose black gown that seemed oddly Eastern in design. To Gudrun she appeared almost ugly, and yet she seemed to have gathered within her a languid, self-confident calm and serenity. The students laughed at something she said, and with a flick of her wrist which made them laugh again she left them, picking up a plate of canapés to offer to the other guests standing and chatting in the kitchen. She drifted toward Utta and Gudrun, closer, with a smile and a word for everyone.



"I have to go," Gudrun said, and left.

Utta caught up with her in the hall, where she was putting on her coat.

"What's happening? Where are you going?"

"Home. I don't feel well."

"But I want you to talk to Tobias, find out more. They need a new assistant now. If Tobias could just mention my name, Meyer would listen to him. . . ."

Gudrun felt a genuine nausea and simultaneously, inexplicably, infuriatingly, an urge to cry.

SPENCER frowns worriedly at me. I look at my watch, Mr. Bowdrey looks at his watch also, and, as he does, the double-trailer truck from the factory in Oxnard rumbles up Wilshire Boulevard. Apologies are offered, the delays on the highway blamed—who would have thought there could be so much traffic on a Sunday?—and Spencer maneuvers the crane into position.

TOBIAS ran his fingertips down Gudrun's back to the cleft in her buttocks. "So smooth," he said, wonderingly. He turned her over and nuzzled her breasts, taking her hand and pulling it down to his groin.

"Utta will be home soon," she said.

Tobias groaned. He heaved himself up on his elbows and looked down at her. "I can't stand this," he said. "You have to get a place of your own. And not so damned far away."

"Oh, yes, of course," Gudrun said. "I'll get a little apartment on Kavalierstrasse. So convenient and so reasonable."

"I'm going to miss you," he said. "Ten days! What am I going to do? Dear Christ."

Gudrun was going to take a dyeing course at Sorau. They met regularly now, almost as a matter of routine—three, sometimes four afternoons a week—at the apartment on Grenz Weg. The weaving workshop closed earlier than the other departments in the Institute, and between half past four and half past six they had the flat to themselves. Utta would obligingly stop for a coffee or shop on her way home—"dawdling for the sake of love," as she described it—and usually Tobias was gone by the time she returned. On the occasions they met he seemed quite indifferent, quite unperturbed at being seen.

"Now, if Utta were named manager of the metal workshop," Gudrun said, "I'm sure she'd be busy till all hours."

"Don't start that again," Tobias said. "I've spoken to Meyer. Arndt has his own candidates. You know she has a fair chance. A more than fair chance." He put his arms around her and squeezed her strongly to him. "Gudrun, my Gudrun," he exclaimed, as if mystified by this emotion within him. "Why do I want you so? Why?"

They heard the rattle of Utta's key in the lock, her steps as she crossed the hall into the kitchen.

When Tobias left, Utta came immediately to Gudrun's room. She was dressing, but the bed was still a mess of rumpled sheets, which for some reason made Gudrun embarrassed. To her the room seemed to reek of Tobias. She pulled the blanket up to the pillow.

"Did he see you when he left?" Gudrun asked.

"No, I was in my room. Did he say anything?"

"The same as usual. No, he did say 'a

more than fair chance.' But that Arndt has his own candidates."

"Of course, but 'a more than fair chance'—that's something. Yes . . ."

"Utta, I can't do anything more. I think I should stop asking. Why don't you see Meyer yourself?"

"No, no. It's not the way it works here, you don't understand. It never has. You have to play it differently. And you must never give up."

SPENCER checks that the canvas webbing is properly secured under the base, jumps down from the truck, and climbs up to the small control platform beside the crane.

I remind Mr. Bowdrey: "You know it's manufactured in three parts. The whole thing can be assembled amazingly quickly. It's painted, finished. We connect the power supply and you're in business."

Mr. Bowdrey is visibly moved. "It's incredible," he says. "Just like that."

I turn to Spencer and give him a thumbs-up. There's a thin puff of bluey-gray smoke, and the crane's motor chugs into life.

TOBIAS sat on the edge of his desk, one leg swinging. He reached out to take Gudrun's hand and gently pulled her into the V of his thighs. He kissed her neck and inhaled, smelling her skin, her hair, as if to draw her deep into his lungs.

"I want us to go away for a weekend," he said. "Let's go to Berlin."

She kissed him. "I can't afford it."

"I'll pay," he said. "I'll think of something, some crucial meeting."

She felt his hands on her buttocks; his thighs gently clamped hers. Through the wall of his office she could hear male voices from one of the drafting rooms. She pushed away from him and strolled over to the tilted drawing table at the window.

"A weekend in Berlin . . ." she said. "I like the sound of that, I must—"

She turned as the door opened and Irene Henzi walked in.

"Tobias, we're late," she said, glancing at Gudrun with a faint smile.

Tobias sat on, one leg swinging slightly.

"You know Miss Velk, don't you?"

"I don't think so. How are you?" Somehow, Gudrun managed to extend her arm; she felt the slight pressure of dry, cool fingers. "A pleasure."

"She was at our party," Tobias said. "Surely you met."

"Darling, there were a hundred people at the party."

"I won't disturb you any further," Gudrun said, moving to the door. "Very good to meet you."

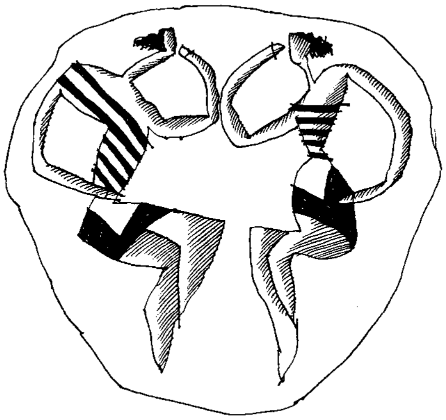
"Oh, Miss Velk." Tobias's call stopped her; she turned carefully to see Irene bent over the drawing table, scrutinizing the blueprint there. "Don't forget our appointment. Four-thirty again?" He smiled at her, glanced over to make sure his wife was not observing him, and blew her a kiss.

At the edge of a wood of silver birches behind the Institute was a small meadow where, in summer, the students would go to sunbathe. And beyond the meadow ran a stream, thick with willows and alders. The pastoral mood was regularly dispelled, however—and Gudrun wondered if this was why it was so popular with the students—by the roaring noise of airplane engines. The tri-motors being tested at the Junkers Flugplatz, just beyond the pine trees to the west, would bank around and fly low over the meadow as they made their landing approaches. The pilots would wave to the sunbathing students below.

Gudrun walked down the path through the birch wood, still trembling, still hot from the memory of Tobias's audacity, his huge composure. She was surprised to see Paulus coming up from the meadow. He was carrying a pair of binoculars in his hand. He saw her and waved.

"I like to look at the planes," he said. "In the war I used to work at an airfield, you know, painting camouflage. Wonderful machines."

She had a flask of coffee with her and spontaneously offered to share it with him. She needed some company, she felt, some genial distraction. They found a place by the stream, and she poured coffee into the tin cup that topped the flask. She had some bread and two hard-boiled eggs, which she ate as Paulus drank the coffee. Then he filled his pipe and smoked while she told him about the dyeing course at Sorau. He said he thought she needed a more intense blue to finish her rug, something hard and metallic, and suggested she might be able to concoct the right color at the dye works.



"With Tobias," he asked suddenly, to her surprise, "when you're with Tobias, are you happy?"

He waved aside her denials and queries. Everyone knew about it, he told her; such a thing could never stay secret in a place like the Institute. She need not answer if she did not want to, but he was curious. Yes, she said, she was very happy with Tobias. They were both happy. She said boldly that she thought she was in love with him. Paulus listened. He remarked that Tobias was a powerful figure in the architecture school, that all power in the Institute emanated finally from the architecture workshop. He would not be surprised, he said, if one day Tobias ended up running the whole place.

Paulus rose to his feet, tapped out his pipe on the trunk of a willow, and they wandered back through the birch wood.

"I just wanted you to be aware of this," he said, "about Tobias." He smiled at her. "He's an interesting man." His features were small beneath his wide, sallow brow, as if slightly crushed by its weight. There were bags under his eyes, she noticed; he looked tired.

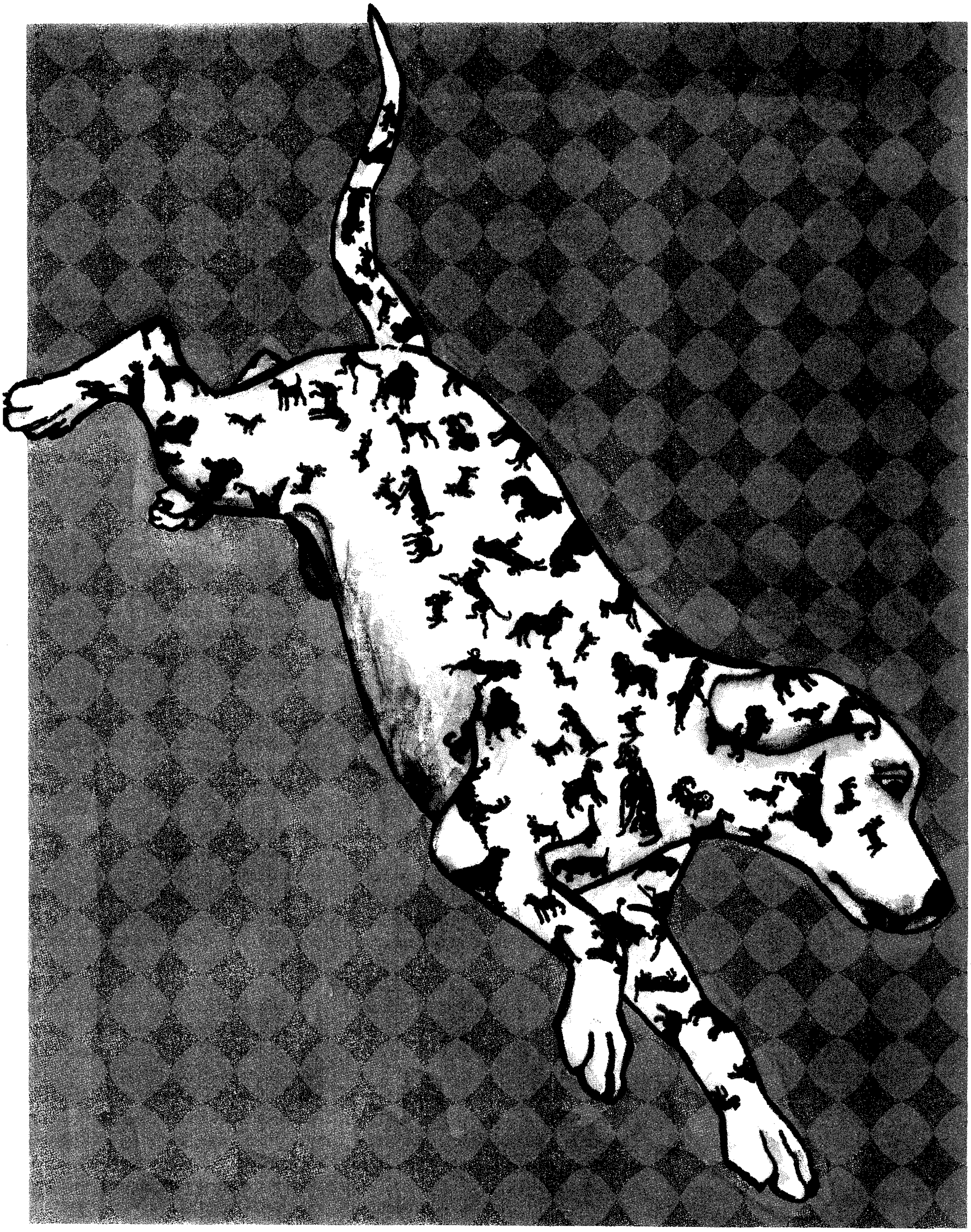
"You're like a meteor," he said. "Suddenly you're attracted by the earth and are drawn into its atmosphere. At this moment you become a shooting star, incandescent and beautiful. There are two options available: to be tied to the earth's atmosphere and plummet, or to escape, moving back out into space"—she was baffled at first, but then remembered he was quoting from his own book—"where you slowly cool down and eventually extinguish. The point is, you need not plummet," he said, carefully. "There are different laws in different atmospheres—freer movements, freer dynamics. It need not be rigid."

" 'Loose continuity,' " she said. "I remember."

"Precisely," he said, with a smile. "There's

SKETCHBOOK • BY LARS HOKANSON AND FRANCES CICHETTI

# TOP DOGS



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a choice. Rigid continuity or loose." He tapped her arm lightly. "Do you know, I think I may be interested in buying your rug."

SPENCER tightens the final bolt and crosses the street to join us on the opposite sidewalk. Mr. Bowdrey, Mrs. Bowdrey, Spencer, and me. It is nearly midday, and the sun is almost insupportably bright. I put on my sunglasses and through their green glass I stare at the Bowdrey mini-diner.

Mr. Bowdrey turns away and takes a few paces, his finger held under his nose as if he were about to sneeze. He comes back to us.

"I love it, Miss Velk," he says after apologizing for the few private moments he has needed. "I just . . . it's so . . . The way you've done those parts that jut out. My God, it even looks like a sandwich—the roll, the meat . . . so clever, so new. How it curves like that, that style—"

" 'Streamline moderne,' we call it."

"May I?"

He puts his hands on my shoulders and leans forward and up (I am a little taller) and he gives me a swift kiss on the cheek.

"I don't normally kiss architects—"

I try not to smile as I contemplate my personal refutation of everything the Institute stood for. "Oh, I'm not an architect," I say. "I'm just a designer. It was a challenge."

GUDRUN never really knew what happened, as the stories changed so often in the telling, and there were lies and half-lies all the time. The truth made both guilty parties more guilty, and they thought to absolve themselves by pleading spontaneity and helpless instinct, but they had no time to compare notes, and the discrepancies hinted at quite another version of reality.

Gudrun climbed the last block from the station and quietly opened the door of the apartment on Grenz Weg. It must have been a little before eight o'clock in the morning. She had gone a few steps into the hall when she heard a sound in the kitchen. She pushed open the door and Tobias stood there, naked, with two cups of steaming coffee in his hands.

His look of awful incomprehension changing to awful comprehension lasted no more than a second. He smiled, set down the cups, said, "Gudrun," and was interrupted by Utta's call from her bedroom. "Tobias, where's that coffee, for heaven's sake?"

Gudrun picked up a coffee cup and walked into Utta's room. She wanted Utta to see that there was to be no evasion of responsibility. Utta was sitting up in her bed, pillows plumped behind her, the sheet to her waist. Tobias's clothes were piled untidily on a wooden chair. She made a kind of sick, choking noise when Gudrun came in. For a moment Gudrun thought of throwing the hot coffee at her, but at that stage she knew there were only seconds before she herself would break, so, after a moment of standing there to make Utta see, to make her know, she dropped the cup on the floor and left the apartment.

Two days later, Tobias asked Gudrun to marry him. He said he had gone to the apartment on Saturday night (his wife was away) thinking that was the day Gudrun was returning from Sorau. Why would he think that? she asked; they had talked about a Sunday reunion so many times. Once, in his stream of protestations, he had inadvertently mentioned a note—"I mean, what would you think? A note like that"—and then, when Gudrun asked, "What note? Who sent you a note?" said he was becoming confused, no, there was no note, he had meant to say she *should* have sent him a note from Sorau, not relied on him to remember, how could he remember everything, for God's sweet sake?

Utta. Utta had written to him, Gudrun surmised. Perhaps even in her name, the better to lure him: "Darling Tobias, I'm coming home a day early, meet me at the apartment on Saturday night. Your own Gudrun." It would work easily. Utta there, so surprised to see him: "Come in, sit down now that you're here, come all this way. Something to drink—some wine, some schnapps, maybe?" And Tobias's vanity, Tobias's opportunism, and Tobias's weakness would do the rest. "Now, darling Tobias, this question of Marianne Brandt's workshop . . ." In weary moments, though, other possibilities presented themselves to Gudrun. Older duplicities, histories, and motives she could never have known about and wouldn't want to contemplate. Her own theory was easier to live with.

Utta wrote her a letter: ". . . no idea how it happened . . . some madness that can infect us all . . . an act of no meaning, of momentary release." Gudrun was sad to lose Utta as a friend, but not very sad to turn down Tobias's proposal of marriage.

I SAY goodbye to Spencer as he sits in the cab of his crane smiling down at me. "See you tomorrow, Gudrun," he says, to my vague surprise until I remember I had told him to call me Gudrun. He drives away, and I rejoin Mr. Bowdrey.

"I have one question," he says. "I mean, I love the lettering, don't get me wrong—'sandwiches, salads, hot dogs'—but why no capital letters?"

"Well," I say, without thinking, "why write with capitals when we don't speak with capitals?"

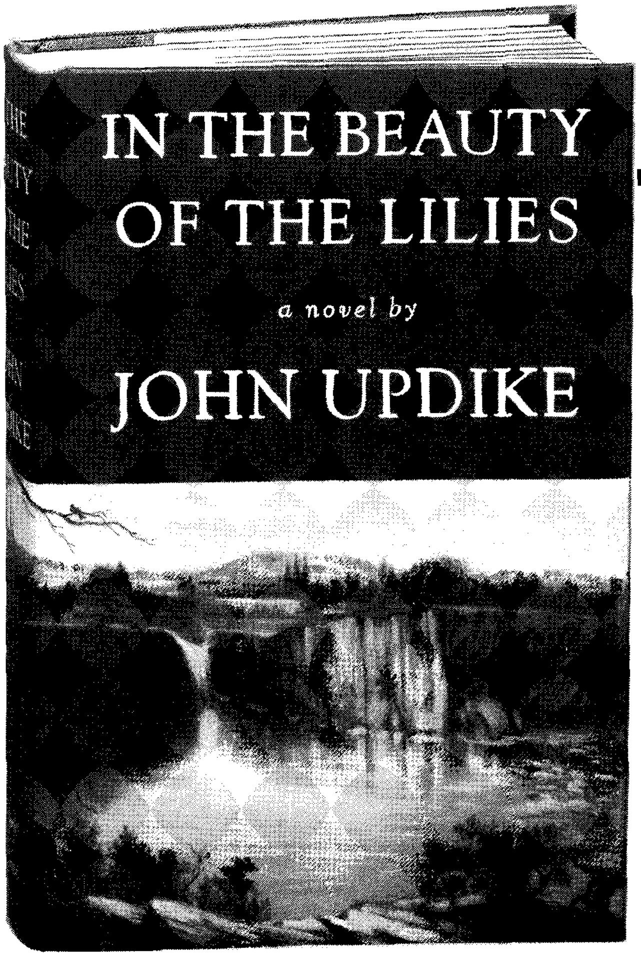
Mr. Bowdrey frowns. "What? . . . Yeah, it's a fair point. Never thought of it that way. . . . Yeah."

Who said that about typography? Was it Albers? Klee? . . . No, it was Moholy-Nagy, László in his red overalls with his lumpy, boxer's face and his intellectual's spectacles. He is in Chicago now. We've all gone, I think to myself, all scattered.

Mr. Bowdrey is telling me that there are fifteen Bowdrey mini-diners in the Los Angeles area, and he would like, he hopes, he wonders if it would be possible for me to redesign them—all of them—in this streamlined, modern-streamline sort of style.

All scattered. Freer. Freer movements, freer dynamics. I remember, and smile to myself. I had never imagined a future designing hot-dog stands in a city on the west coast of America. It is a kind of continuity, I suppose. We need not plummet. Paulus would approve of me and what I have done, I think, as a vindication of his principle.

I hear myself accepting Mr. Bowdrey's offer, and I allow him to kiss me on the cheek once more—but my mind is off once again, a continent and an ocean away in drab and misty Dessau. Gudrun Velk is trudging up the gentle slope of Grillparzerstrasse, her suitcase heavy in her hand, taking the shortcut from the station, heading back to the small apartment on Grenz Weg which she shares with her friend Utta Benrath, and hoping, wondering, now that she has managed to catch an early train from Sorau, if Tobias would have some time to see her alone that afternoon. ♦



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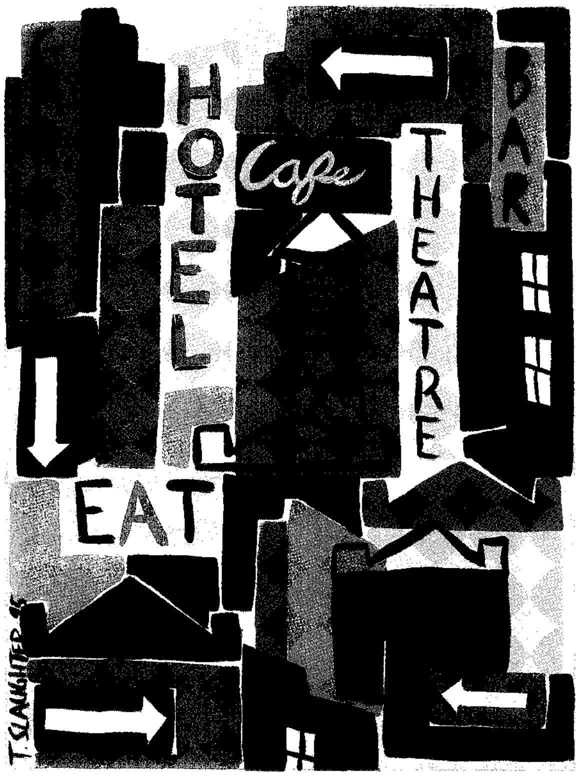
BOOKS

# FIRST CITY

*Why America should have more New Yorks.*

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

Two things that happened this year got me wondering why New York City and American cities in general still bother to exist. The first was a plane ride back East from St. Louis. I sat next to a smart, pleasant woman from Springfield, Missouri, who was taking her eleven-year-old son to see relatives in Boston. The son had already scored points with me by removing a book, rather than a Game Boy, from his backpack, and, when his mother told me that they were stopping in New York for two nights and that it was her son's first visit there, I asked what sights they planned to see. "We want to go to the Fashion Café," she said, "and we want to try to get on the 'Today' show. There's that window you can stand in front of? My son wants to do that." I said I hadn't heard about the window, and it certainly did sound interesting, but what about the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building? The woman gave me a funny look. "We'd love to see Letterman, too," she said. "Do you think there's any chance of getting tickets?" I told her she could always hope.



TOM SLAUGHTER

The second thing that happened, after this reminder that for the rest of the country New York is now largely a city of the mind—at best, a site for the voodoo transformation of image into flesh—was a walk I took down Silicon Alley, in lower Manhattan. Silicon Alley is that district where the romance between downtown hipsters and the digital revolution has emerged from upper-floor bedrooms and set up house behind plate glass; I could see girls with fashion-model looks who wouldn't be caught dead at the Fashion Café clustering around monitors while gurus with shaved heads helped them to configure. The Cyber Café, at 273 Lafayette Street, is a strange phenomenon. According to Web dogma, it ought not to exist. "Click, click through cyberspace," William J. Mitchell writes in his recent manifesto "City of Bits." "This is the new architectural promenade . . . a city unrooted to any definite spot on the surface of the earth, shaped by connectivity and bandwidth constraints rather than by accessibility and land values, largely asynchronous in its operation, and inhabited by disembodied and fragmented subjects who exist as collections of aliases and agents." Yet the Cyber Café—to say nothing of the thousands of clubs and galleries and bookstores and non-cyber cafés doing business within a mile of it—resembles nothing so much as an old-fashioned see-and-be-seen promenade.

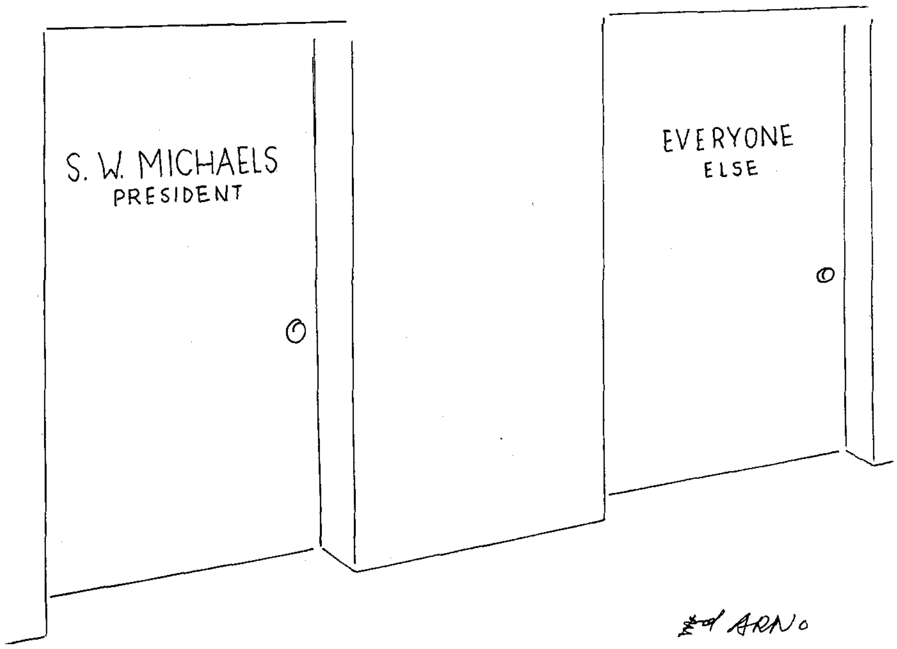
Two New Yorks, then: one a virtual province of Planet Hollywood, the other a definite spot on the surface of the earth populated by young people who, even as they disembody and fragment themselves, cannot resist the urge to Be There. Between the New York of Springfield's imaginings and the New York of Lafayette Street is a disjunction that I feel well equipped to appreciate. I grew up in Missouri, and in the last fifteen years I've moved to New York six times. At no point was a job or a ready-made community waiting for me. As a self-employed writer, I can live anywhere I want, and it would make sense for me to choose an inexpensive place. Yet whenever I'm in one of those inexpensive places I feel compelled to reinflict New York on myself—this despite my fear of neighbors with televisions and pianos, my aversion to Gothamite provinciality, and my immunity to the city's "cultural vitality." When I'm here, I spend a lot of time at home; as a rule, I hit the museums and theatres only in a last-minute panic, before moving somewhere else. And, fond though I am of Central Park and the subways, I have no overpowering love for the Apple as a whole. The city has little of the soul-stirring desolation of Philadelphia, say, and none of the deep familiarity of Chicago, where I was born. What draws me back, again and again, is simply safety. Nowhere else am I safe from the question: Why *here*?

Manhattan, in particular, offers the reassurance of high rents, which means that this is a city people want to live in, not escape from. It's no accident that Parisians adore New York. Its orthogonal street grid notwithstanding, they feel right at home here, since one of the things that make Europe Europe is that its urban centers are still attractors, rather than repellers, of public life. Conversely, for an American Midwesterner like me, hungry for a feeling of cultural placement, New York is the next best thing to Europe.

Most North American metropolises are wildly centrifugal, however, and the contrast between our lifeless inner grids and Europe's thriving centers has prompted the architect and essayist Witold Rybczynski to ask, "Why aren't our cities like that?" His latest book, "City Life" (Scribner; $23), is an examination of "urban expectations" in the New World. Although he devotes much of the book to explaining the different *look* of our cities, Rybczynski understands that "like that" means something deeper: an urban vitality, an at-homeness with the idea of living in cities. Washington, D.C., has Parisian-style diagonal boulevards, height uniformity, and monumental architecture, and yet no one would mistake the feel of a residential D.C. street at ten in the evening for the Fourteenth Arrondissement. Nor is there any mistaking our country's current mood of hostility toward cities. Upstate New York has taken revenge on Gotham in the person of George Pataki; planned cuts in Medicare, welfare, and other federal programs target city centers like ICBMs; and the groups that the Western and suburban Republicans now ascendant in Congress have identified as flies in the ointment—poor people, gay people, liberal élites, rap musicians, N.E.A.-sponsored performance artists, government bureaucrats—all happen to be concentrated in big cities.

"City Life" traces the provenance of this hostility. After paying a visit to Williamsburg, Virginia, Rybczynski reports having been struck not "by its strenuous 'historical' character . . . but rather by how familiar it seemed." Williamsburg is the prototype of the American small town—distinctive not only in its "spatial liberality" but in its relation to nature. European towns were traditionally enclosed by walls of stone and walls of class; membership in the bourgeoisie (literally, "town dwellers") brought various jealously guarded privileges. American towns were open from the start. Surrounded by wilderness, Rybczynski says, "town builders reacted not by emphasizing the contrast between the natural and the man-made, but by incorporating natural elements in the town as much as possible, whether as green squares, tree-lined streets, or ample gardens." That the Colonial town became specifically "a celebration of the house," however, resulted from the accident of North America's being settled by the English and the Dutch, whose wealthier citizens, unlike their counterparts in other European countries, had a marked preference for individual home ownership. In America, even people of modest means could afford private ownership, and land was so plentiful that each house could have a private yard. Nor was the deconcentration of society simply spatial. Rybczynski discerns in our early history "a startling tendency toward a far-flung homogeneity," and he relates how Alexis de Tocqueville, scouring the backwoods for an American peasantry in the eighteen-thirties, instead found a settler who had books and newspapers and spoke "the language of towns." With the rule-proving exception of African slaves and Native Americans, there was no peasantry above the Rio Grande, and the result of this disjunction between the rural and the rustic was distinctively American: urbanity without urbanness.

In Rybczynski's telling of it, the first century and a half of post-Colonial American history was essentially a detour in the inevitable fulfillment of these proto-suburban ideals. Quaker practicality and a profusion of immigrants insured that Philadelphia, for example, which William Penn had laid out as a "green country town," quickly saw its spacious grid parcelled up by speculators and bricked up with row houses. It was Penn's grid, not his green vision, that became the norm for big American cities. In the absence of a belief in cities as unique repositories of culture, moreover, there was little to prevent American cities from becoming purely commercial enterprises. However much the country's urban gentry came to hunger for European refinements, attempts at making cities more "like Paris"—Daniel Burnham's plan for a more horizontal Chicago of parks and boulevards is perhaps the most famous—soon foundered on the economics of skyscrapers or sank beneath waves of immigration. As Rybczynski puts it, "the city profitable replaced the city beautiful."



Yet the city profitable worked. The first decades of this century were the heyday of urban life in America. I generally resist wishing I'd lived in an earlier era (I always imagine myself dying of some disease whose cure was just around the corner), but I make an exception for those years when the country's heart was in its cities—the years of Lou Gehrig and Harold Ross, Automats and skyscrapers, trolley cars, fedoras, and crowded train stations. I make this exception precisely because the era seems so anomalous, so extraneous to the continuum connecting Williamsburg Colonials and Tocqueville's urbane woodsmen to the far-flung tract-housing dwellers of today. It seems like a time when the country could have turned in a less wasteful, more public-spirited, more *European* direction.

The irony is that these decades were a time, perhaps the only time, when European cities were looking westward for inspiration. If there's a villain in "City Life," it's Le Corbusier, who, with what Rybczynski calls "a Warholian gift for self-promotion," toured the world publicizing his vision of the Radiant City of the future. "City Life" offers a nice contrast between the heroic descriptive work of the nineteenth-century Tocqueville and the malignant fatuity of the twentieth-century Le Corbusier, whose vision was prescriptive: superskyscrapers surrounded by grass and superhighways; a Cartesian separation of work from play, of housing from commerce. When Le Corbusier proposed razing six hundred acres of central Paris, he was ignored by everyone but his fellow French intellectuals. In America, however, his ideas influenced a generation of city planners and eventually inspired hundreds of "urban renewal" projects. In Manhattan, we still live with the radiance of N.Y.U.'s high-rises and East Harlem's projects.

Radiant City planning, whose wrongheadedness is old news now, by no means killed the American inner city single-handed. Kenneth T. Jackson concluded his study of American suburbanization, "Crabgrass Frontier," with an excellent analysis of the "residential deconcentration" of America. Jackson pinned the unique degree of American suburbanization on two fundamental causes: racial prejudice and inexpensive housing. Suburbs provide uneasy whites with a safe haven, and a variety of factors—high per-capita wealth, cheap land and transportation, government subsidies and tax breaks—have made flight affordable to the great middle class.

The most salient contemporary American urban expectations, therefore, are that core cities will be poor and nonwhite, and that the suburbs will be soothingly homogeneous. Rybczynski is strangely oblivious of these particular expectations. In "City Life" 's final chapter, "The Best of Both Worlds," he celebrates the Philadelphia community of Chestnut Hill, which became a middle-class haven in the first decades of this century, when a local millionaire named George Woodward and his father-in-law built several hundred beautiful rental houses of Wissahickon schist. With medium population density, a parklike ambience, and carefully planned architecture, the Woodward development showed the influence of the Hampstead Garden Suburb, a model development begun outside London in 1906. In "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," Jane Jacobs observed that garden cities, since they have neither the street life of real cities nor the privacy of real suburbs, succeed only if their residents are homogeneous and relatively affluent. Rybczynski, who now owns a house in Chestnut Hill, contradicts Jacobs by asserting that the community "has become more socially and economically heterogeneous." He extolls it as "a small town and a city both," as "an only slightly urbanized Arcadia" whose central shopping street, Germantown Avenue, is "precisely the sort of old-fashioned pedestrian district people find so attractive." He speaks of the "long" waiting list for Woodward-house rentals.

For a check on the reality of American cities, it's worth taking a closer look at the neighborhood Rybczynski calls home. The last time I moved to New York, it was from Philadelphia. My wife and I had heard about the waiting list for Woodward houses, and we were surprised when, at the interview required of all applicants, we were told that several houses were immediately available. Only after we had rented one—and realized that every one of the dozens of families in Woodward houses on our block, in the substantially black city of Philadelphia, was white—did it seem significant that we had not been informed of the vacancies until after the rental agent had a chance to observe that we were white. At the closest good supermarket and the closest mall, both of which are in mixed neighborhoods, you will rarely see a shopper from Chestnut Hill. When I shopped at those places, I was struck by the exemplary warmth and courtesy with which I was treated. Knowing that a black male shopper at a predominantly white mall or supermarket would probably have had a quite different experience, I couldn't help wondering whether the courtesy wasn't meant to be *literally* exemplary. As in: We would like to be treated the way we are treating you.

THE First Cities of European countries have tended to be capitals in every way—commercially, culturally, governmentally, and demographically. Early America, however, was so far-flung and so distrustful of concentrated authority that it was not until 1900 or so, when Wall Street and the big media had established themselves as the country's shadow government, that the four functions fully converged in New York. One measure of New York's en-

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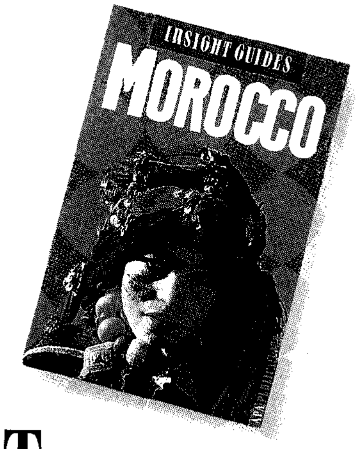

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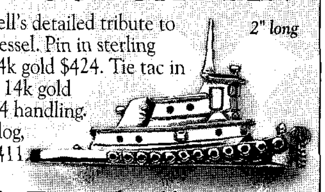

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during primacy is that it continues to act as a lightning rod for national resentment. When Americans rail against "Washington," they mean the abstraction of federal government, not the District of Columbia. New York is resented as an actual place—for its rudeness, its arrogance, its crowds and dirt, its moral turpitude, and so forth. Global resentment is the highest compliment a city can receive, and by nurturing the notion of the Apple as the national Forbidden Fruit such resentment guarantees not only that ambitious souls of the "If I can make it there, I'd make it anywhere" variety will gravitate toward New York but that the heartland's most culturally rebellious young people will follow. There's no better way of rejecting where you came from, no plainer declaration of an intention to reinvent yourself, than moving to New York; I speak from personal experience.

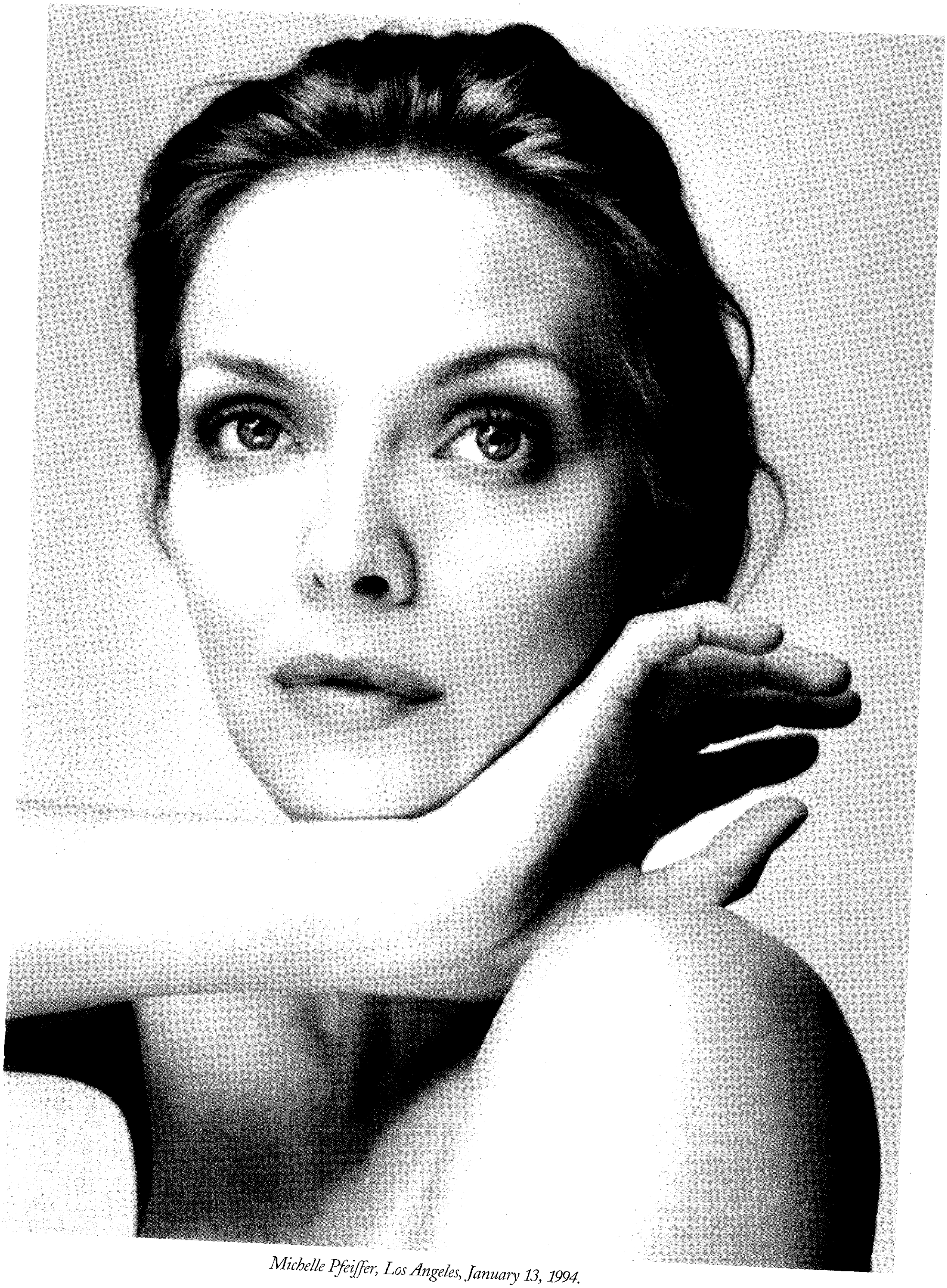
It worries me a little, therefore, that the city has now been paid the additional compliment of a million-three-hundred-thousand-word encyclopedia. There's something decidedly valedictory about "The Encyclopedia of New York City" (Yale; $60), edited by the same Kenneth Jackson who wrote "Crabgrass Frontier." The "Encyclopedia" has the heft and ambition of a monument. It's a grand list for an age in love with lists. As soon as I got the book, I leafed to the entry for "Sewers," a topic of perennial fascination. I found a good historical overview of the subject but no hint of the daily drama of contemporary sewers. Indeed, a numbing sameness afflicts the structure of nearly all the longer articles in the "Encyclopedia." Each entry begins with vaguely colorful arcana from the city's earliest history (reading about "Intellectuals," for example, we learn that "the leading intellectual circle of the late eighteenth century was the Friendly Club"), goes on to pursue the subject doggedly decade by decade, often achieving a full head of steam around 1930 (thus, under "Intellectuals," *The New Republic* and *Partisan Review* are treated at some length), and finally peters out rather sadly in the present ("In the mid 1990s . . . major magazines of opinion continued to be published in the city but lacked the urgency and influence that they had enjoyed in earlier times"). It's an odd thing to experience the present, which is, after all, so *present*, again and

SHOWCASE BY RICHARD AVEDON

# CLOSEUP

WHO knew that Michelle Pfeiffer had moods? When she began, this former supermarket-checkout girl seemed like just another slice of California sun—a golden commodity. Her character in the 1979 TV series "Delta House" was called simply The Bombshell—a sexy chimera like Suzanne Somers' blonde-behind-the-wheel in "American Graffiti." A year later, Pfeiffer chased cheap hoods in the cop show "B.A.D. Cats," as a forerunner of action bimbos like Heather Thomas and Heather Locklear. In her first big film, "Grease 2," she played sidekick to Maxwell Caulfield's pretty-boy mugging, which was like the second coming of Fabian. Only with her sullen reign as the coke queen in Brian De Palma's "Scarface" (1983), her fifth film, did it become apparent that she was more than cream filling. Like a pimp's prize filly or a Warhol model, she had the cheekbones and the hauteur of a pleasure trophy turning on itself in boredom and disgust. It's fascinating to watch Pfeiffer's dedication as an actress do battle with the lassitude of her characters' status as luxury objects. This accounts for the wariness in her work, the dissatisfaction expressed in the irritable way she rakes her hair to one side in midsentence. One of the frustrations in following her career is that she has often been at her most compelling in films blockaded by male ego—for instance, Robert Towne's gnomic "Tequila Sunrise." Yet such distractions haven't dimmed her aura or inhibited her range. She bore her head like a lamp in "The Russia House," heated up "The Fabulous Baker Boys," outclassed the sour chaos of "Batman Returns" with the sleek silhouette of her Catwoman pose and her urban-jungle purr, and held her own against the boyz and girlz in the hood in the surprise hit "Dangerous Minds." Next month, she co-stars with Robert Redford in "Up Close & Personal," playing a Diane Sawyer-like infobabe on the fast career track. Redford and Pfeiffer: blond on blonde; a pair of gold bars trying to relate.

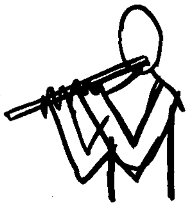
—JAMES WOLCOTT



*Michelle Pfeiffer, Los Angeles, January 13, 1994.*

again as the dusty terminus of historical spurs. Reviewers of the "Encyclopedia" have dwelled on what's missing from it, and their quibbles reinforce the notion of the city as a work completed rather than as a work in progress.

The chief pleasure of the "Encyclopedia" lies in a kind of Derridean lateral slide of association. I move from "Terrorism" to read about "Anarchism," then go across the page to "Amphibians and Reptiles," on to "Birds," and (after a side trip to "Birdland" and a courtesy call on "Parker, Charlie") to "Cockroaches," which "are known to be attracted to toothpaste," which brings me to "Colgate-Palmolive" and its founder, "Colgate, William," who fled England in 1795 "to escape public hostility toward his father, who had supported the French Revolution." It's like a game of Telephone: "Anarchism" connecting with the sansculottes not by way of history but, rather, via "Cockroaches." Yet there's something empty about this pleasure. A city lives in the eye, ear, and nose of the solitary beholder. You turn to literature to find the interior point of intersection between subject and city, and as a living connection to New York's history a few lines of Herman Melville or Don DeLillo outweigh whole pages of an encyclopedia. This is Ishmael downtown:



> There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward.

This is DeLillo's Bucky Wunderlick, walking the same streets more than a century later:

> It was early afternoon and soon to rain, nondeliverance in the air, a chemical smell from the river. The bridges were cruelly beautiful in this weather, gray ladies nearly dead to all the poetry written in their names.

DeLillo, an essential New York artist, is unmentioned in the "Encyclopedia," whose lengthy "Literature" article has little more to say about the post-Norman Mailer scene than this: "Many of the writers who had become well known in the 1960s left the city during the 1970s and 1980s."

DURING those nineteen-seventies and eighties, Rybczynski says, a new shopping center opened in the United States every seven hours. In "City Life" he asserts that as malls increasingly come to have hotels attached to them and museums and skating rinks and public libraries housed within them they are entitled to be considered "the new downtown." He marvels at the "variety" to be found in a shopping-center food court ("Tex-Mex, Chinese, Italian, Middle Eastern") and compares the scene to a sidewalk café. What ultimately attracts people to malls, he believes, is that they supply "a reasonable (in most eyes) level of public order; the right not to be subjected to outlandish conduct, not to be assaulted and intimidated by boorish adolescents, noisy drunks, and aggressive panhandlers." He adds, "It does not seem too much to ask." To "academic colleagues" who might object to the "hyperconsumerism" and "artificial reality" of malls, Rybczynski replies that "commercial forces have always formed the center of the American city" and that "it is unclear to me why sitting on a bench in the mall should be considered any more artificial than a bench in the park."

For my part, I'm willing to admit to an almost physical craving for the comforts of the suburban mall. Natural opiates flood my neural receptors when I step from the parking lot into the air lock. Inside, the lighting is subdued, and every voice sounds far away. Never mind that Waldenbooks rarely stocks Denis Johnson and Sam Goody has no Myra Melford; I have cash in my wallet, my skin is white, and I feel utterly, utterly welcome. Is this a community? Is the reality artificial, or am I part of a genuine promenade? I don't know. When I'm not being actively repelled by the purple and teal that are this year's favored suburban leisure-wear colors, I'm too busy enjoying the rush of purchase to pay much attention.

My craving for city life feels entirely different. It's often tinged with anxiety; I'm never entirely relaxed except at home; there's a world of difference between inside and outside. How is it possible that life in New York, whose buildings are like upwellings of pure molten capital, can be so much *less* beholden to the world of consumerism than life in the suburbs, which ostensibly offer more freedom and privacy? The answer is, narrowly, that cities represent an older, less advanced stage in the development of buying and selling, in which producers work cheek by jowl with consumers, and the whole economic mechanism is open to inspection and so is less susceptible to the seamless enchantment of modern sales pitches; and, more generally, that there's something in the very nature of cities which enforces adult responsibility. I don't mean to suggest that we city dwellers are any less mad for products than suburb dwellers are, or that the cleansing and police actions of various Business Improvement Districts are not, even now, transforming large swaths of Manhattan into outdoor malls—only that it's far easier on the streets of New York to have experiences that have nothing to do with the spending of money than it is in the typical galleria.

Rybczynski is correct, nevertheless, in stressing that "civic" and "commercial" have always been near-synonyms in America. Although European cities, too, historically functioned as trading and manufacturing centers, they had more ancient functions as well: as fortifications, as the sites of cathedrals and universities, as the residences of princes, and, most important, as the embodiment of regional or national identities. Barcelona *is* Catalonia, and every new building erected there serves to make Catalonia's identity that much more glorious and concrete. It's impossible to imagine an American city being cherished in the same way, if only because we have no regional identities as coherent and enduring—as *tribal*—as the Catalonian. This country was populated largely by immigrants in search of freedom or economic opportunity, or both, and I suspect it's no accident that the heyday of American cities directly followed the decades of peak immigration. These immigrants were similar only in their rejection of the Old World and so could never develop urban fealties that extended beyond a given ethnic neighborhood. It was only a matter of time before they adopted the New World ideal of house-as-kingdom, with its implications that what you earn and what you buy matters far more than where you do it.

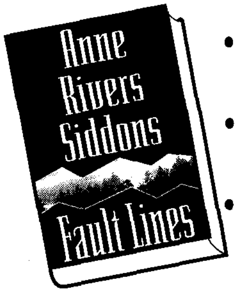
The real mystery, therefore, is not that we have so few cities "like Paris" but that we have any at all. However many Americans prefer the suburbs, there are still millions who expressly choose cities. "Yuppie" is not a kind appellation, but the people who put the "u" in the word remain impressive in their sheer numbers. Even the most woebegone urban centers—Syracuse in the Rust Belt, Colorado Springs in the midst of neo-Californian sprawl—manage a few blocks of mixed-use vitality. And many larger cities—New York, Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle—have a clearly sustained critical mass. For better or worse, the most reliable measure of a city's vitality is whether rich people are willing to live in the center of it. Once upon a time, the middle class was the bellwether of urban vitality; in Mayor Giuliani's speeches, it still is. But, as Labor Secretary Robert Reich has observed, the term "middle class" today has a definition more sociological than economic. And the best definition might be "suburban."

However reliable the presence of the rich may be as an indicator, it's merely the final effect in a chain of causes which begins with a city's ability to attract young people. How long would the upper crust persevere on Park Avenue without the horde of young singles who fill Yorkville? How long would downtown remain a capital of culture without a constant infusion of young artists, students, and musicians? We hear a lot about the dependence of poor people on cities, but young people, especially creative young people, need them just as much. The suburbs may be an ideal place to spend a childhood, but people in the years between leaving the nest and building a nest of their own need a place to congregate. So cities will continue to see, at a minimum, heavy nighttime and weekend use—unless, of course, Net-brokered marriages become common; and the only thing more dismal to imagine than virtual courtship is daily life in the marriage of two people who would court that way.

HIKING is what I do for fun in Manhattan on windy days or after sundown, when the diesel fumes lift. I'm a recreational walker, and in the last few years I've noticed something odd when I've hit the sidewalks of suburban Missouri and suburban Colorado: a not negligible percentage of the men speeding by me in their cars or sport-utility vehicles (it's always men) feel moved to yell obscenities at me. It's hard to know why they do this. The only things unusual about me are that I'm not driving and that I'm not wearing teal and purple or a backward baseball cap. My guess is that they yell at me simply because I'm a stranger, and from the perspective of their glassed-in vehicles I have no more human reality than the coach on their TV screens who has elected to punt on fourth and short.

I've been yelled at in New York, too, but only by deinstitutionalized psychotics, and then only in the midst of fellow subway riders who sympathized with me. Jane Jacobs identified as a hallmark of city life the existence of privacy in heavy crowds—a privacy whose maintenance depends not on the pseudo-parental expedients of isolated houses and controlled shopping environments but on modes of civilized behavior best learned in public spaces like the sidewalk. That the country's widely decried "breakdown of civility" began at home rather than in so-called urban jungles can be confirmed at any movie theatre, where audiences accustomed to watching videos in the bedroom have forgotten how to shut up. In "Death and Life," Jacobs also quoted Paul Tillich, who believed that the city, by its very nature, "provides what otherwise could be given only by traveling; namely, the strange." Familiarity, whether of chain stores or of cookie-cutter subdivisions, erodes the autonomous intelligence and, in a weird way, undermines privacy. In the suburbs, I'm the stranger; I feel exposed. Only in a crowded, diverse place like New York, surrounded by strangeness, do I come home to myself.

I'm not so innocently enamored of cities, of course, as not to realize that the plate-glass windows of Silicon Alley serve purposes of display similar to those of the CRT screens behind them: that the hidden link between Fashion Café and Cyber Café is a culture of Being Seen. It's possible to worry, too, that young people who come to Manhattan seeking what I seek—literal centrality, the privacy of crowds, the satisfaction of being a fly in the ointment—will eventually be repelled by the miasma of



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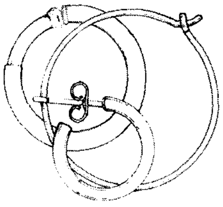

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Disneyfication that is hanging over SoHo and Fifty-seventh Street and creeping into the East Village and Times Square. For now, though, I work and sleep in a building that houses two dressmakers, a realtor, an antique dealer, a caterer, and a fish seller. When I lie on the floor and relax by listening to my breathing, I can hear the slower respirations of the city itself, a sound like the rumble of a surf: subway trains crowded with people who are teaching themselves how to be here. ♦

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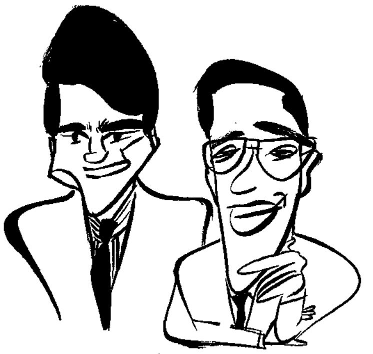

*Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar*

TOM BACHTELL

ANOTHER election year has dawned, bringing with it a host of ancient worries. Reporters and commentators, pollsters and social scientists, the concerned citizens of the League of Women Voters and the even more concerned ones of Common Cause—all will find good reason to fuss as the campaign grows old. What, they will ask, can be done about—and here you should feel free to fill in the blank. Low voter turnout? The influence of PACs? The single-issue voter? The sound bites of TV news? The polarized electorate? The decline of party discipline? The fretting grinds on and on, as each worry is adduced as evidence that the democratic process itself has been brought low.

One worry looms over all the rest, as a kind of Queen Bee of Concerns, for it seems to contain within it the cause and the consequences of every other worry. I refer, of course, to negative campaigning, or attack ads, as the worry is also known. These can polarize the electorate, drive voters from the polls, destroy party discipline, force even the most idealistic reporters to deal in sound bites—all at the same time. At least, that's what political observers have decided, and so they will surely welcome the publication of "Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate" (Free Press; $24), the first book-length study of the effects of negative campaigning. There's enough here to make the most experienced worrier giddy with concern.

"Going Negative" is a work of political science, stuffed with charts and tables and algebraic equations, but it conforms in many of its essentials to the wisdom of the popular press. The authors—Stephen Ansolabehere, of M.I.T., and Shanto Iyengar, of U.C.L.A., both political scientists—begin with the premise that while politics, as Mr. Dooley said, ain't beanbag, it has become increasingly un-beanbag-like over the last several years. Our political discussion, as reflected in Congress and elsewhere, is dominated as never before by the ideological extremes. Voter turnout is at an all-time low, voter cynicism at an all-time high. Political rhetoric drips with vitriol. The best lack all conviction, while Republicans are filled with passionate intensity. What's more, the authors write, "the single biggest cause of the new, ugly regime is the proliferation of negative political advertising on TV."

This, as I say, is the premise not only of the book but of most serious discussion among the political class. It is so widely accepted that it seems pointless to point out that it's also highly questionable. The "regime" may be ugly, but it isn't new. Andrew Jackson went to his grave believing that his wife had been driven to hers by the harshness of his opponents' attacks. The cartoonists of Lincoln's day routinely depicted him as a baboon. Until the late nineteenth century, fistfights could break out in the halls of Congress. The electorate of 1860, or of 1896, or of 1936, was far more polarized than the one today.

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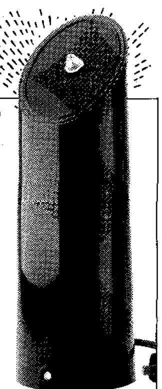

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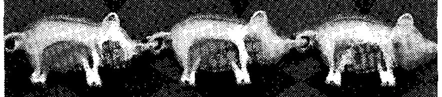

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the postwar placidity of the Eisenhower years. By then, a consensus had jelled about the role of government in national life—always the fundamental question of democratic politics—and the consensus held for thirty years. Democrats and Republicans alike were comfortable with the status quo, the one pushing gently this way, the other tugging ever so slightly that way. For a brief sunny moment, politics actually was beanbag.

The consensus has now broken down, owing to the failure of the status quo on many fronts, and the fundamental question has reasserted itself. The argument turns on ideology, and engages ideologues. Ideologues tend to be indecorous, their debates overheated. Most voters, not being ideologues, or even politically inclined, view the argument with distaste. In time, we can expect a new consensus to emerge, but for now the regime will indeed be ugly—as it has been, off and on, throughout American history.

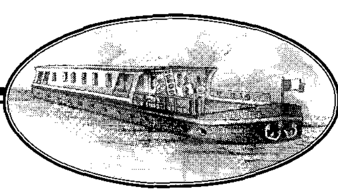
"GOING NEGATIVE" would be of little interest were it merely a reiteration of the common view. But it contains surprises. The authors have reached their findings after a series of elaborate and expensive experiments, and the book's description of these is tedious enough to convince us that they are scientifically sound. "Our results are unexpected, in both big and small ways," they write. For instance: "Campaign advertising is not a 'pack of lies.' " Ads impart real information, "even on matters of substance," about the candidates. Political advertising doesn't manipulate voters but "awakens latent partisan predispositions" in them. Further, the influence of interest-group advertising is more benign than is commonly thought; special interests, for various reasons, purchase many more "positive" than "negative" ads. Still more ironically, the truth-squad techniques of recent journalism, in which TV reporters assess the truthfulness of negative ads, is probably backfiring. "Ad-watches actually *benefit* the candidates whose messages are scrutinized in the media"—mostly because they repeat the ads themselves.

"Political advertising is not the bogeyman that its critics have often portrayed it to be," they conclude. This is refreshingly unorthodox. When it comes to *negative* political advertising, however, Ansolabehere and Iyengar find themselves squarely within the mainstream of the worrywart community. "We would even go so far as to say," they go so far as to say, "that negative advertisements may pose a serious antidemocratic threat." How so? " 'Attack' advertising actually suppresses voter turnout"—by inflaming partisanship, lowering the tone of the campaign, and encouraging the belief that politics is a mean business. As a consequence, "nonpartisan" voters, in particular, stay home come Election Day. Low voter turnout, as we have seen, is a disease that the doctors of democracy diagnose every campaign season. The authors have now found the virus responsible.

The cure is more elusive. Even for a work of social science, "Going Negative" offers a hopelessly uninspired peroration. Given the First Amendment and its inconvenient protection of political speech, laws against "negative" ads are out of the question. Networks themselves might be asked to refuse to air negative ads, but this would seem merely to shift power away from voters to journalists or, worse, network executives. In the end, the authors say, the answer may lie in a revival of party discipline—returning them, no doubt with great relief, to yet another favorite worry. And the rest of us are right back where we began.

So let's start over, with another premise: we might even go so far as to say that *positive* campaign ads pose a serious anti-democratic threat. Imagine an ad for Candidate X, who strides confidently before the cameras, perhaps with her photogenic daughter in tow, and announces that if elected she will do everything possible to protect the right to abortion, or to reduce street crime. Her opponent goes unmentioned, and only substantive issues are addressed: a perfectly positive ad, sure to bring a coo from the truth squadders in the press. It will take a negative ad from Candidate Y to tell voters that X is in favor of parental notification and a forty-eight-hour waiting period, or that as a federal judge she routinely let violent felons back on the streets.

Political consultants like this joke: How do you tell a positive ad from an attack ad? Answer: the attack ad has a fact in it. The joke is a bit too defensive, and consultants are a cynical, not to say sleazy, bunch, but they have a point. Attack ads are cayenne in the jambalaya of American democracy. They may even have some nutritional value. But they will never be to the taste of people who prefer puffed wheat, or beanbag. ♦



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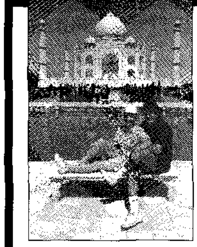

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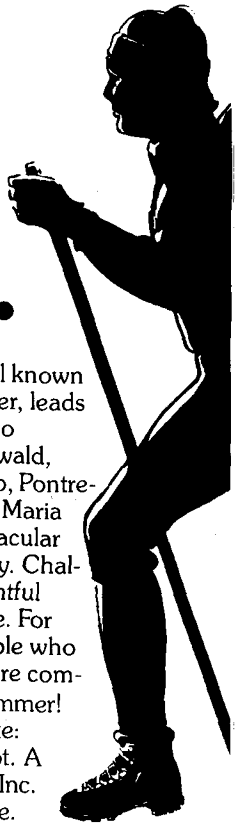

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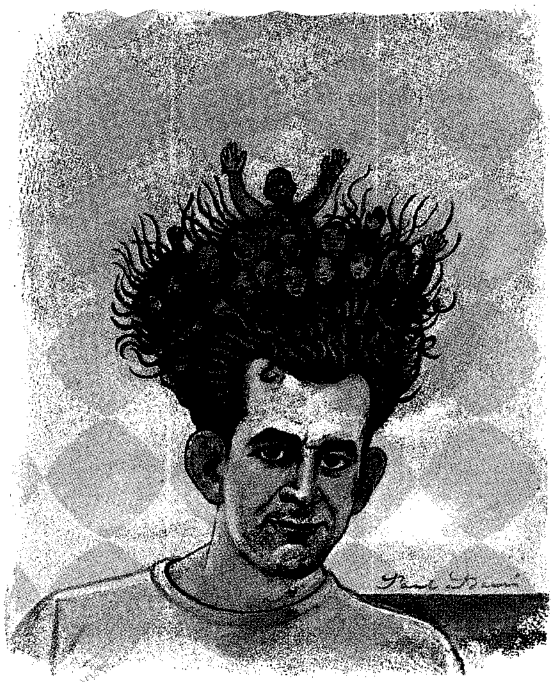
# HELLO AND GOODBYE

*Jonathan Larson's "Rent" tries to update the musical.*

BY JOHN LAHR

By some terrible irony, the restaurant next to the Minetta Lane Theatre, where a memorial service for the composer-lyricist Jonathan Larson was held last week, is called La Bohème. Puccini's opera was the inspiration for "Rent," Larson's rock opera (at the New York Theatre Workshop), and the show features, among forty well-sung numbers, three songs that are as passionate, unpretentious, and powerful as anything I've heard in the musical theatre for more than a decade. Larson died of an aortic aneurism on January 25th, a few hours after the dress rehearsal of "Rent." He was thirty-five. Larson's name is new to me, but his talent and his big heart are impossible to miss. His songs spill over with feeling and ideas; his work is both juicy and haunting. That's why, after seeing "Rent," I ended up at his memorial service. I found out that Larson was a rangy, goofy-looking guy with jug ears and a funny grin; that he grew up in White Plains; that he had the capacity to love and to be loved; that he'd done six downtown musicals with suitably quirky titles like "Tick, Tick . . . Boom!," "J. P. Morgan Saves the Nation," and "Superbia"; that he waited tables at a SoHo diner to support his musical habit; that he dreamed of earning enough money from his writing to splurge on cable TV; and that he believed, like Gatsby, in the green light and the orgiastic future. "Count the green flags, not the red flags," he told his friends. He also talked about his crazy ambition to bring the musical up to date: "Rent" is billed as "The Rock Opera of the '90s." Larson is certainly not the first composer to take aim at that elusive target, but he may be the first to have hit it. His gift for direct, compelling, colloquial lyrical statement seems to prove that the show tune can once again become both pertinent and popular. Over his desk Larson had posted the motto "Make the familiar unfamiliar, and make the unfamiliar familiar." Whatever the problems of the production, the score of "Rent" achieves the astonishing feat of marrying the musical's old sense of blessing to the society's new sense of blight.



*One song before I go: Jonathan Larson, a downtown Sondheim with a head full of stories and music.*

PAUL DAVIS

The landscape of "Rent" is a gray and dishevelled loft space and environs in the Lower East Side's Alphabet City. "The curtainless set seems more like a pile of junk than a set," Larson's stage direction says; and waste is the right metaphor for this soiled, threadbare world of artists, addicts, and the homeless—the compost out of which the lost souls in "Rent" try to grow their dreams. Here poverty, and not abundance, is the musical's issue. "No Visa No Mastercard / No Amex / No travellers' checks / No dollars / No cents / No," a chorus of Village venders sings. It's Christmas, and the holiday provides an ironic frame for the uncharitable events of "Rent," which include the eviction of a group of artists from their loft. In fact, every assumption of the traditional musical has been stood on its head. The old romance of triumph has been replaced by the new romance of despair. Now lovers don't meet cute, they meet infected. Roger (Adam Pascal), a young songwriter struggling to write one good song before his light is snuffed out, falls for Mimi (Daphne Rubin-Vega), a strung-out dancer; both are H.I.V.-positive. The drag queen Angel (Wilson Jermaine Heredia) camps up catastrophe in his seduction of Collins (the smoky-voiced Jesse L. Martin), a young teacher who ends up giving him safe harbor. "Yes," Angel sings. "This body provides a comfortable home / For the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome." Mark (Anthony Rapp), a would-be filmmaker who bears witness to the group's eviction battle and earnestly tries to take the moral temperature of his times, asks, "How can you connect in an age / Where strangers, landlords, lovers, your own blood cells betray?" Death is the climate in which this musical lives. The air is full of loss—loss of home, loss of dreams, loss of life. If it sounds like Sondheim territory—well, in a way, it is. Larson won a Stephen Sondheim Award for "Superbia" and a Richard Rodgers Development Award for "Rent." Although he wasn't a Sondheim clone, he was definitely a disciple; he even works his decidedly uptown mentor—a Broadway baby if there ever was one—into a rhymed catalogue of downtown bohemian icons: "To Sontag / To Sondheim / To anything taboo . . ." (At the memorial service, a college friend recalled long late-night talks with Larson about "why Stephen Sondheim was God and Jerry Herman the enemy.") If Larson doesn't have the word hoard or the technical skills of a Sondheim, neither does he have the glibness. Larson was more emotional than his showy hero. His songs have urgency—a sense of mourning and mystery which insists on seizing the moment. "No day but today" is the show's last sung line—at once a plea and a philosophy.

The aroma of "Rent" may not be sweet, but it is also not sour. Larson's gift was for the elegiac, which celebrates both grief and gladness. He uncovers the poignance in his characters' panic—a manic quality that suits rock's electrified sound. This combination of gravity and grace is best expressed in the opening of Act II, where fifteen actors come to the foot of the stage and perform Larson's gospel song "Seasons of Love." ("I broke up with a girlfriend because she said I couldn't write a gospel song," Larson is reported to have told a friend. On the evidence of the inspired and subtle simplicity of "Seasons of Love," he was right to leave.) The song is an anthem and also a kind of epitaph:

> Five hundred twenty-five thousand
> Six hundred minutes
> Five hundred twenty-five thousand
> Moments so dear
> Five hundred twenty-five thousand
> Six hundred minutes
> How do you measure—measure a year?
>
> In daylights—in sunsets
> In midnights—in cups of coffee
> In inches—in miles
> In laughter—in strife
>
> In five hundred twenty-five thousand
> Six hundred minutes
> How do you measure
> A year in the life?

Larson's answer is "How about love? / Measure in love," and Gwen Stewart, in the chorus, embellishes the lines with elegant gospel riffs. In Steve Skinner's shrewd arrangement, the song is reprised in the middle of the act in counterpoint with a reprise of a beautiful, heartbreaking blues, "I'll Cover You." Larson really seems to have known about love. By merging the refrains of the two songs, he combines the sense of time passing with the sense of affection. The moment of connection is powerfully immediate and reverent. Collins sang the words to Angel in Act I. Now, at Angel's funeral, he sings to the coat that was Angel's gift before laying it on the drum that substitutes for his dead lover's casket:

> Open your door—I'll be your tenant
> Don't got much baggage
> To lay at your feet
> But sweet kisses I've got to spare
> I'll be there—I'll cover you.

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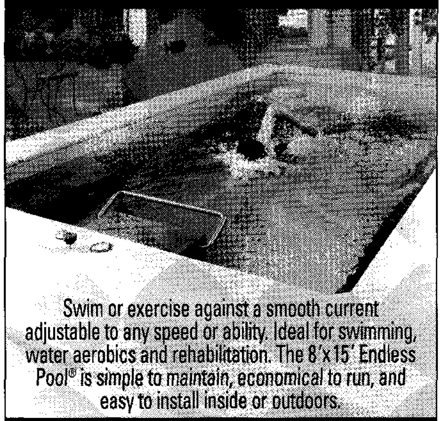

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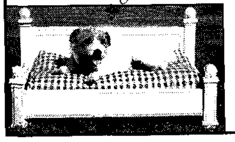

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of solace and the longing for it. "With a thousand sweet kisses I'll cover you," a soloist sings along with Collins' testament to his unequivocal love: "If you're cold and you're lonely / You've got one nickel only." Collins and the company continue, "Oh lover / I'll cover you / Oh lover," as the refrain merges with the eloquent "Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred moments so dear." The tenderness of the singer and of the song hits an audience like a punch to the heart.

At the memorial service, a "Rent" cast member said that he once gushed to Larson, "I think you're going to change the American musical theatre," and Larson replied, "I know." Perhaps Larson might have—but not, I think, with the din of rock opera. The problem is not with Larson's songs but with the nature of song itself. The pleasure of rhyme runs counter to analysis. The audience can't really reflect while it's being ravished. As a result, character detail dissolves into a few brushstrokes of attitude; plot points are briefly addressed, only to be lost as one song piles on top of another. "Rent" tells eight separate stories, but as a structure the through-sung musical can't support that kind of narrative overload. Inevitably, the theatrical shorthand of "Rent" makes it wobble. What you get is a song cycle tricked out into a notional story whose events are not so much dramatized as indicated. The musical becomes a kind of soap opera of song. The artists are evicted, then not; Mark sells out to network television, then doesn't; the quarrelling lesbian lovers Maureen (Idina Menzel) and Joanne (Fredi Walker) break up, then don't; Mimi resolves to shake her drug habit, then doesn't. In all this to-ing and fro-ing you can feel Larson and his director, Michael Greif, struggling to take the musical to a new dramatic place—and if it's not a total victory it's also not a defeat. Greif and the lighting designer, Blake Burba, seem to have fallen under a brutalist downtown spell, and display a kind of willful disregard for entertainment values. Many of the stage pictures are smudged, but, despite its shambolic action and slovenly set, there's a weird power to the piece. This impact could have been magnified by a more rigorous cutting and rearranging of Act I: its rhythm is off kilter, and it should end with "La Vie Bohème," Larson's uptown Broadway number extolling downtown life. Here Greif's staging is crisp and funny. "To riding your bike, midday past the three-piece suits," Mark sings. "To fruits, to no absolutes / To Absolut, to choice, to the *Village Voice*, to any passing fad / To being an us, for once / Instead of a them / La Vie Bohème." The song builds to one last raspberry at the straight world: "To sodomy," the cast sings (just in case we didn't know we were teetering on the brink of fashion). "It's between God and me / To S & M / La Vie Bohème."

"Rent" could use more streamlining, more color, more revision. But all that hardly matters. By the end of the evening, Larson's talent has taken the audience to places where the musical, with its boulevard frivolity and its boulevard nihilism, never ventures these days. "Rent" dares to embrace the ugly and the beautiful, the sin and the miracle. And, if it naïvely rants at American capitalism at thirty dollars a seat ("And when you're living in America / At the end of the millennium / You're what you own"), at least it's asking about justice, and not, like "Starlight Express," about whether a steam engine can find happiness with an electric train. Larson clearly had his eye on the prize. He wanted to be great, and he had great ambitions for the musical theatre. He puts this single-minded pursuit of his craft, this drive to redeem his time on earth, into Roger's "One Song Glory," an apotheosis that now feels eerily prophetic:

One song
Glory
One song
Before I go
Glory
One song to leave behind . . .
Find
Glory
In a song that rings true
Truth like a blazing fire
An eternal flame.

Larson would have been thirty-six last week. He was just beginning. Go see his musical and remember his name. ♦

### CLEVER EXCUSES DEPT.

[*From the Athens (Ohio) Messenger*]

A Hudnell Road woman reported Tuesday someone has been entering her trailer and resetting her alarm clock.

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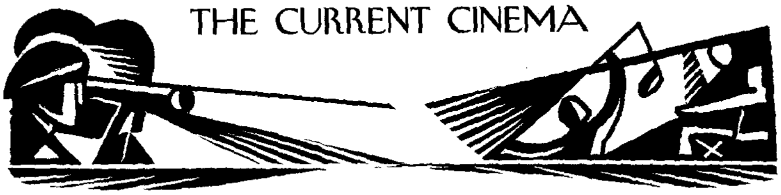


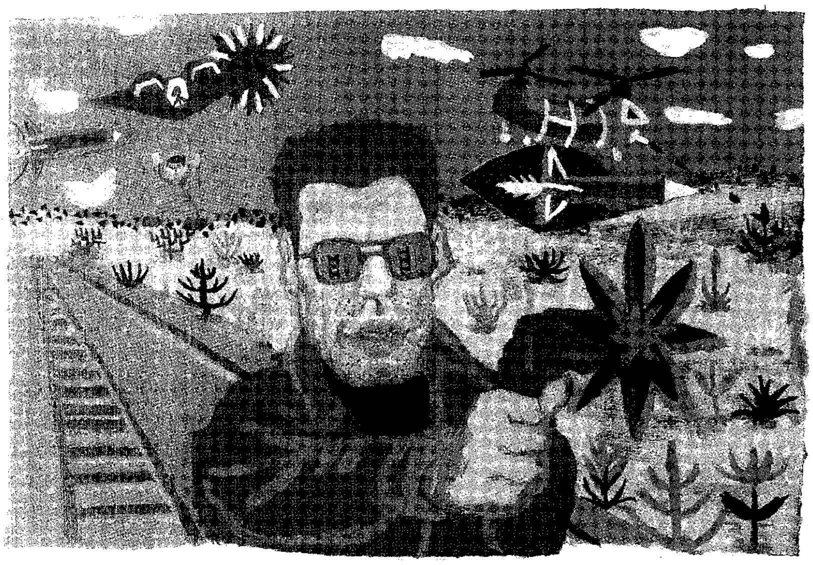
## THE CURRENT CINEMA

# PULP FISSION

*A pyrotechnical thriller and a drama about intrigue at City Hall.*

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

IN John Woo's "Broken Arrow," John Travolta plays a disgruntled Air Force pilot, Vic Deakins, who hijacks a couple of nuclear warheads and demands hefty compensation from the United States Treasury for their return. (According to the movie, the term "broken arrow" is military code for a lost nuclear device.) This is not, however, a standard-issue doomsday thriller. There's very little of the fate-of-the-world-in-the-balance tension that is usually achieved by means of long telephone conversations between the confident psycho and sweaty bureaucrats in conference rooms: typically, the villain gloats and taunts while the men in suits try to figure out who he is. In this case, the bad guy's identity isn't a secret. Initially, Deakins allows suspicion to fall on his co-pilot, Riley Hale (Christian Slater), but that's just a brief and almost whimsical diversionary tactic; he abandons it once it has bought him sufficient time. He *wants* everyone to know who he is, because his reputation for resourcefulness and audacity lends weight to his threat: no one doubts that Deakins has the nerve to set off an atomic bomb.

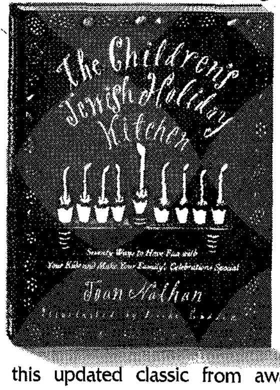


*What a rush: John Travolta supplies a jolt of comic energy to "Broken Arrow."*

GARY PANTER

And, if you're familiar with John Woo, you may guess, early on, why "Broken Arrow" needs *two* stolen warheads: one of those suckers is going to get detonated, and that won't even be the climax. Woo's Hong Kong action pictures—the most celebrated are "A Better Tomorrow" (1986), "The Killer" (1989), "Bullet in the Head" (1990), and "Hard-Boiled" (1992)—are shameless orgies of destruction, which feature daredevil heroes (often played by the hilariously insouciant Chow Yun-fat) mowing down hundreds of adversaries in deliriously choreographed battle sequences. At their best, his movies build to a near-hysterical pitch of cheeky ingenuity and violent excess, and, because they are, for the most part, defiantly unrealistic, their brutality has a giddy, oddly innocent quality. Woo loves aggression, speed, and noise so much that he can't repress his impulse to put ever more spectacular carnage on the screen: give him a bigger budget and he'll order up another dozen explosions and a few thousand extra rounds of ammunition.

Make a Memory...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And, despite an obvious debt to Peckinpah and De Palma, Woo brings his own distinctive sensibility to the job of creating bloodthirsty cinematic action: in a way, his style is the movies' closest equivalent to the punk-prankster aesthetic of the Ramones. With a couple of A-bombs at his disposal, Woo can resist temptation for only so long; halfway through, he uncorks the big one, and then he spends the rest of the movie trying to top it.

He succeeds. Part of what makes Woo's movies so much fun is that he never allows anything—not reality, or narrative coherence, or concern for the audience's ability to absorb non-stop, high-impact thrills—to slow him down. He's like a kid playing with toy soldiers until way past his bedtime: indefatigable, and reluctant to end the story until he has crammed in every bit of excitement he can get away with. That quality, combined with his penchant for extravagant effects, means that the main characters in his pictures have to be pretty hardy. In Woo's Hong Kong gangster movies, the heroes, heroines, and major villains are riddled with gunshots, blown out of their shoes by powerful explosions, dropped from perilous heights, and yet, because the show must go on, they bounce back with astonishing alacrity, and never seem any the worse for the punishment they've taken: to the end, they remain limber enough to leap through the air while firing an automatic weapon with each hand. In "Broken Arrow," Deakins, Hale, and Hale's sidekick—a cute, spunky park ranger named Terry Carmichael (Samantha Mathis)—manage to survive the nuclear blast, which takes place, providentially, in an abandoned copper mine, far below the surface of the Utah desert. The soundtrack rumbles; the ground ripples (a superb special effect); the characters, who have just escaped being trapped in the mine, pause for two or three deep breaths and about thirty seconds' worth of awe-struck contemplation; and the chase resumes, with undiminished energy. Woo—whose first American movie, the Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle "Hard Target" (1993), was uncharacteristically restrained—is obviously determined to indulge himself fully this time, and at the picture's halfway point there's still quite a bit of unfinished business: so many weapons, so little time.

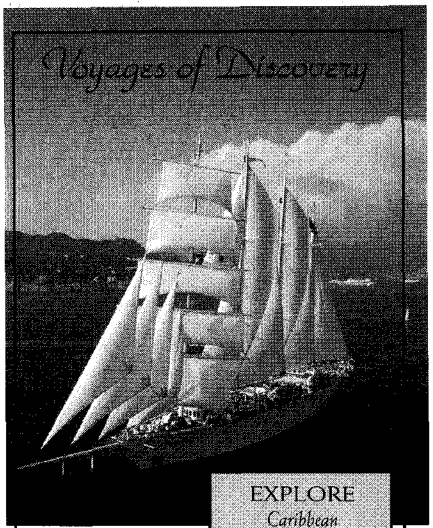
The screenplay of "Broken Arrow" is by Graham Yost, who also wrote "Speed." The two pictures have a similar hurtling momentum, but Woo's movie is nuttier, more flexible, and much more entertaining. Like "North by Northwest," this thriller wants to cover as much ground, in as many different ways, as it possibly can, and is disarmingly aware of its own absurdity. It's difficult to think of a mode of transportation that isn't employed in this extended chase. Pre-blast, Woo moves people around by means of Stealth bombers, helicopters, Humvees, trucks, and a mine elevator; thereafter, a boat and a train provide the mechanical thrills. And the locations seem to have been selected in order to demonstrate that Woo can pull off a dazzling action sequence in any setting: on land or on water; in the air or underground; against vast Western backgrounds or within the tight confines of a cockpit, a mine shaft, or a boxcar. Amazingly, though, "Broken Arrow" never feels merely show-offy, and its wildly eclectic approach to settings and visual motifs doesn't destroy its unity as a thriller. Woo carries us from place to place and from set piece to set piece by the sheer force of his desire to provide pleasure. He tosses off risky stunts and eye-popping effects like one-liners, with a rapid-fire rhythm that lets us know he's got a million of 'em.

He also has John Travolta, whose exuberance supplies an extra jolt of comic energy to the action sequences, and whose sinister charm gives the movie some old-fashioned star power to fall back on in its occasional moments of repose. Slater and Mathis are likable—this is Slater's best performance—but in Woo's pictures the character to watch is invariably the chain-smoking guy in shades, and in "Broken Arrow" that guy is Travolta. Although Deakins is utterly psychotic, Travolta invests the character with a kind of boyish, all-American joy that is very refreshing in this genre. In recent years, villains in megabudget adventure movies have been played almost exclusively by Europeans and Dennis Hopper; Travolta succeeds in being genuinely alarming without relying on either oily menace or wild-eyed hysteria. The qualities that mark Deakins as a dangerous lunatic are his absolute fearlessness and his profound, unabashed enjoyment of his own wickedness, and that's the sort of dementia that John Woo respects—perhaps even shares. This villain's appetite for destruction is voracious, and his delight in creating havoc is irrepressible. When something blows up, he can't help exclaiming "What a rush!" And when the hero says to him, "You're out of your mind," Travolta flashes his biggest, sweetest smile and replies, "Yeah—ain't it cool?" It is.

HAROLD BECKER'S "City Hall" is an ambitious, crowded political thriller whose aim is to plunge the viewer into the chaos of municipal government, and the movie, like the New York City it portrays, never quite manages to satisfy all the conflicting interests that tug at it. This picture has dozens of characters and locations, four screenwriters—Ken Lipper, Paul Schrader, Nicholas Pileggi, and Bo Goldman—and at least three ideas about what kind of story it's telling. At times, "City Hall" seems to be a skillful but conventional urban melodrama, in which an intrepid truth-seeker—here Deputy Mayor Kevin Calhoun, played by John Cusack—investigates a simple crime and winds up uncovering high-level corruption. At other times, the movie presents itself as a pure film à clef, alluding explicitly to the scandals that bedevilled the Koch administration in the mid-eighties and culminated in the suicide of the Queens borough president, Donald Manes. (Lipper was a deputy mayor under Koch.) And, finally, "City Hall" tries to be a serious drama about political disillusionment, modelled on Robert Penn Warren's great novel "All the King's Men" (and the pretty good 1949 movie that was derived from it). This picture's flamboyant populist mayor, John Pappas (Al Pacino), is a Northern, ethnic variant of Warren's Willie Stark, an ambiguous Southern spellbinder who was clearly based on the Louisiana demagogue Huey Long; Deputy Mayor Calhoun, who narrates in voice-over, happens to be from Louisiana himself, and, like Warren's young narrator, Jack Burden, ultimately discovers that he's still a bit too idealistic for the cynical business of big-time politics.

Long's famous political slogan "Every man a king" is quoted in the film and might also be its motto; everyone, both on and off the screen, seems to be fighting to assert his or her inalienable right to be heard, and the result is a picture that is as cacophonous and mysteriously frustrating as democracy itself. The three movies struggling for ascendancy within "City Hall" remain at one another's throats almost to the end, and then settle for a rickety, obviously untenable compromise. In the movie's first half, when the elaborate thriller machinery is being set in motion, "City Hall" is speedy, clever, and absorbing. Becker's clipped docudrama style builds tension efficiently, and for a while the picture works as a solid, straightforward thriller with unusually vivid and diverse touches of local color. But as the mystery nears solution "City Hall" dissipates its energy in attending to its other agendas: the parallels with the real-life scandals of the Koch era become stronger, and the movie's debt to the tragic sensibility of "All the King's Men" becomes impossible to ignore. Each of these elements, in a different way, makes the resolution of the suspense plot entirely predictable: if you know what happened to Donald Manes, you foresee the fate of the corrupt Brooklyn boss Frank Anselmo (Danny Aiello); and, if you know what happened to Jack Burden, Calhoun's climactic confrontation with the mayor won't hold many surprises, either.

If Becker and his corps of screenwriters hadn't led us to believe that "City Hall" was going to be a thriller, they might have got away with this odd program of cobbled-together notions. As it is, though, the movie's second half feels like the betrayal of a campaign promise. The picture reneges on its commitments to some of the members of its impressive cast, too. Bridget Fonda, David Paymer, and Martin Landau are among the terrific actors who end up having almost nothing to do. And, although Pacino is persuasive in his quieter moments, Becker allows him to grandstand in a long, embarrassing scene in a black church; at the funeral of a murdered child, Pappas takes the pulpit and delivers an oration that is meant to be rousing but instead comes off as an excruciating parody of black preaching style. (The mayor's rapport with African-Americans, like his luxurious head of dark hair, is obviously intended to convey the message that this is *not* Ed Koch.) Cusack, who plays Calhoun as a mood-stabilized James Carville, does his best to keep this unstable coalition of ideas and genre styles from collapsing completely, but not even his sly, alert performance can save the picture. He tries to fight "City Hall," and the outcome of his battle, like everything else about the movie, is predetermined. He doesn't have a chance. ♦



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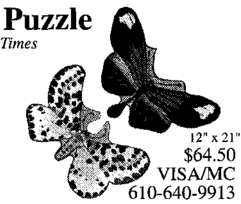

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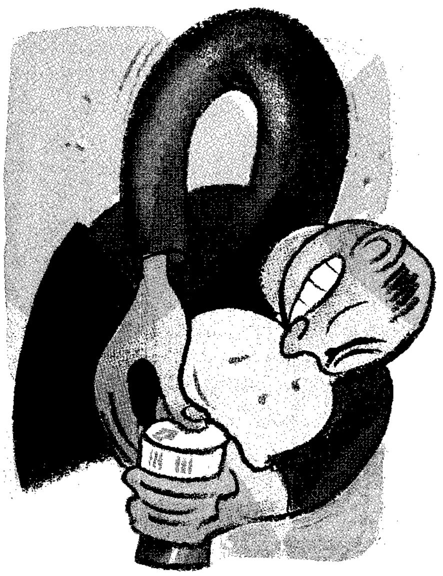
### BY JOHN UPDIKE

MAYBE the madness began with strapping tape. Its invention seemed to excite people, so that packages arrived more and more impenetrably wrapped, in layer upon layer of the tough, string-reinforced stuff. Where tearing fingers used to do the job, an X-Acto knife and a surgical precision had to be mustered. Domestic injuries mounted, but the tape kept coming, along with flesh-colored plastic tape that wouldn't tear—just stretched, like tortured flesh—no matter how hard you pulled.

Then one day, in the long twilight of the Reagan Presidency, the cereal and sugar boxes that had always said "Press Here" ceased to yield, when pressed, the little pouring holes we remembered from childhood. Rather, our thumbnails broke, and turned purple overnight. Padded book envelopes, which used to open with an easy tug on the stapled turned-over flap, were now taped *over* the staples. The taping was tenacious, multilayered. Postal regulations, some said: too many clerks were calling in sick after cutaneous contact with half-bent staple ends. Sometime under Bush, with everybody distracted by televised bulletins from the Gulf War, the self-sealing book envelope was promulgated. Now there was no hope of a tidy opening and a thrifty reuse; nothing less than a hatchet or a machete would free the contents, in a cloud of fast-spreading gray fluff.

All this time, childproof pill bottles had been imperceptibly toughening and complicating, to the point where only children had the patience and eyesight to open them. Though the two arrows were lined up under a magnifying glass and superhuman manual force was exerted, the top declined to pop off. Similarly, the screw-tops on the can of creosote and the bottle of Liquid-Plumr refused to slip into the grooves that in theory would lift them up—up and free. Instead, they rotated aimlessly no matter how much simultaneously downward and sideways, or semicircular, pressure was applied. Occasionally, an isolated householder did enjoy a moment of success with these recalcitrant containers; manufacturers, swiftly striking back, printed the instructions in even smaller type or, less readably yet, in raised plastic letters. The corporations, it seemed, did not want their products released into use—any upsurge in demand might interfere with their lucrative downsizing programs.



MARCELLUS HALL

The little bags of peanuts with which the downsizing airlines had replaced in-flight meals became, as the Clinton Administration warily settled into the seats of power, impossible to open. The minuscule notch lettered "Tear Here" was a ruse; in truth, the plastic-backed tinfoil, or tinfoil-backed plastic, had been reinforced in that very place. Mounting frustration, intensified by the normal claustrophobia, cramping, and fright of air travel, produced dozens of cases of apoplexy and literally thousands of convulsively spilled peanuts. Even the little transparent sacs of plastic cutlery for airplane meals (when these were actually served) proved seamlessly resistant, and yielded up their treasure only when pierced from within by a painstakingly manipulated fork.

Such consumer-resistant packaging devices were all as bows and arrows before the invention of gunpowder, however, once the maker of Vanish, a brand of mysterious crystals alleged to be able to clean toilet bowls, came up with a red child-resistant cap, shaped like a barred "O," a three-dimensional "Θ," whose accompanying arc-shaped directions read, "To open: Squeeze center while pulling up." Well, good luck, Mr. and Mrs. America: squeeze until your face turns red, white, and blue. No amount of aerobic finger exercise will ever pack in the squeeze power needed to release those crystals into that murky toilet bowl.

Either as a nation we have grown feeble or the policy of containment, once preached as the only safe tactic for dealing with the Communist menace, has now refocussed upon the output of capitalism, in all its sparkling, poisonous, hazardous variety. They—the corporate powers that control our lives—have apparently decided, in regard to one product after another, to make it, advertise it, ship it, *but not let us into it.* Be it aspirin, creosote, salted peanuts, or Vanish, it is too wonderful for us—too potent, too fine. We rub the lamp, but no genie is released. We live surrounded by magic caskets that keep their tangy goodness sealed forever in. ♦

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